The Oratorical and Operatic Oboe: An Exploration of the Oboe's Roots in Vocal Traditions and an Expansion of Chamber Music Repertoire for the Oboe and the Voice

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

(Oboe Performance)

at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison

2020

Date of final oral examination: 08/25/20

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to my Doctoral Performance and Research Committee members—Andreas Oeste, Marc Vallon, Dan Grabois, David Crook, and Aaron Hill—for guiding me through this process. Thank you to my family, friends, and colleagues for supporting me along the way!

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Introduction

The oboe has been compared to the human voice since the instrument's earliest history. Though the oboe has been around for roughly 350 years, singing is "an instinctive expression of human feeling, [and] must be assumed to go back beyond all records of humankind."[1] In the course of evolving musical traditions, indeed, the practice of vocal art usually precedes that of the instrumental art. As Jirí Tancibudek succinctly puts it, "fine singing and its unparalled power for musical expression has often been the ideal goal and example for instrumentalists."[2] The development of the oboe as an instrument can thus be best understood in its relationship to the voice, first as an orator using the offices of rhetoric to express passions to a Baroque audience, then as a proxy for the Romantic opera diva, then as a vehicle for poetic expression in the 20th century.

Oboe scholars Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes explain how this metaphor has evolved yet persevered over time.

> Because of its persistence, the analogy with the human voice is often taken as a sign of stylistic consistency over time. This assumption, however, overlooks the considerable changes in both taste and technique that singing has undergone over the centuries. The eighteenth-century instrumentalist sought to emulate the rhetorical quality that text gave to vocal music. The emphasis was thus on articulateness and dynamic suppleness rather than on volume and uniformity of sound, [which] sacrifices…the comprehensibility of the text, pervasive in opera houses today.[3]

In the first part of this document, I will examine specific intersection points between the oboe and voice from the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. This will not be an attempt to compile an exhaustive list of all music for oboe and the voice; rather I will view broader trends of how composers and performers have regarded the connection between these instruments, supported by specific musical examples. In the second part, I will present five new chamber works for the

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[1] Oscar Thompson, *The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians,* 1728.
[2] Jirí Tancibudek, "Oboe and the Human Voice," 6.
[3] Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe,* 259.

oboe and voice(s) that I have commissioned and premiered. I will analyze these new works through the lens of historical precedent as well as the experiences of the composers and performers involved in their creation.

In the discussion that follows, I will explore the following questions that led me to this research: Why does the oboe evoke a singing quality? What was the earliest music to feature the oboe and voice together? Did the oboe emerge as a successful instrument because of its expressive qualities or did the music written for it help develop the possibilities of the instrument, or both? How did the relationship between the two instruments evolve alongside changing stylistic trends? What are the similar and different physical characteristics of the two instruments? What elements of singing and speaking are paralleled in the oboe's technical language? How do extended techniques perpetuate the connections between the oboe and voice?

In answering these questions, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the oboe itself—both its role in music of the past, and ways to perpetuate its relevance in new music moving forward.

1) Oboe and Voice Historically

The oboe, while descending from a specific Western lineage, does not trace easily back to a single source in antiquity. For centuries, and across continents, the treble double reed instrument family has included instruments as wide ranging as the shawm, chirimía, zurna, aulos, and tibia. These instruments carry strong associations with the outdoors—generating loud, martial, and imperialist sounds—and are often played in consorts rather than alone. "Treble double-reed instruments have for centuries been invested with the potential to captivate those who hear them and to still the savage spirit."[4]

Yet the shifting musical climate in Europe at the onset of the 17th century began shaping vocal and instrumental music. It is not a total coincidence that the hautboy shifted from an outdoor to an indoor instrument along with the formation of the *dramma per musica* and early Italian opera. As Josef Marx puts it, "with the beginning of the Baroque period a complete re-alignment of musical instruments took place…many instrumental types were discarded and only those remained that had an acceptable indoor sound, that were accurately controllable in pitch and dynamics, and that could attain the personal attributes inherent in the solo voice."[5] The biggest difference between the hautboy and its predecessor double-reed treble instruments—in Europe and elsewhere around the world—was its ability to produce a controlled sound.

[4] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 7.
[5] Josef Marx, "Tone of the Baroque Oboe," 7.

Emergence of the Hautboy

Though the treble double reed tradition spans many centuries and global cultures, the oboe as we understand it today in the Western classical tradition traces back to the emergence of the hautboy in the second half of the 17th century. To clarify, the term "Baroque oboe" seems to be more commonly used when describing the instrument of this period. Bruce Haynes, in his article "Sweeter than Hautbois," challenges the terminological distinction between the "modern oboe" and the "Baroque oboe"

> …the revival of the early oboe is very much a modern phenomenon, whereas the symphonic oboe, bound to traditional concert repertoire, has changed so little precisely because it is a "historical oboe," an instrument that reached its present form in the 1860s and 70s. Just as we have spared the harpsichord the name "baroque piano," the hautboy deserves a name in its own right. In the baroque period, the standard English name for the oboe was "hautboy" (pronounced "O • Boy," or in the international phonetic alphabet, [oboi]).[6]

I will therefore use the term "hautboy" instead of "Baroque oboe" in this paper.

The evolution from shawm to hautboy is not easy to trace. A protomorphic new instrument first began to emerge in the French court of Louis XIV around 1657, and a definitive model in 1670. Though it evolved naturally from the shawm, the new hautboy did not completely replace the use of the shawm; both instruments continued to serve their specific purposes for at least another hundred years. Interestingly enough, this new "hautboy" came to represent opposing ideals—delicate, demure, and indoors—from what its treble, double reed ancestors like the shawm did. This is more likely due to refinement in the skill of reed making rather than instrument making.[7] The development of the hautboy marked a transition from an ensemble instrument intended for outdoor playing to an indoor, soloistic instrument. Shawms were most often played in consorts, with an emphasis on equality between instruments. Most

[6] Bruce Haynes, "Sweeter than Hautbois: Towards a Conception of the Schalmey of the Baroque Period," 57.
[7] Marx, 10.

music was not conceived as being specifically for shawms, per say, but could be played on any consort of winds (recorders, flageolets, etc.)[8] Shawms were better at creating a wall of penetrating sound than they were at creating an elegant, expressive line.

Contrasting from the shawm, the new hautboy played solos; its demure character informed much of the earliest music written for the instrument. The hautboy's first solo medium of performance—notably an instrument-specific usage for the time—was as an obbligato instrument in vocal arias. Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes see this as no accident. "The hautboy was modelled on the new singer of monodic music, a singer who performed *le nuove musiche*, developed by composers like Caccini and Monteverdi… Monody rejected the older four- and five-part style, replacing it with a polarized bass with a solo vocal line, and the music was used – even abused – for the sake of the text."[9] This emergence of monody as the primary musical texture with which to set text was also referred to as the *seconda prattica*.

Humanists looked to the teachings of classical Greece and Rome for inspiration on how to set music. During this revival period, they sought to unlock the secrets of ancient musical practices, emphasizing music's power to elicit an emotional response, rather than its proportional harmony within a divinely ordered universe. In this Humanist era, Caccini, Monteverdi, and other members of the Florentine camerata concurred that ancient Greek dramas were to be sung in performance. By focusing on a solo singer and moving away from previous polyphonic models of composition, they prioritized the text above the music. This new practice ultimately gave birth to opera.

As early opera developed, homophonic textures allowed space for contrapuntal instrumental obbligatos to interact with the vocal melody over a bass. Obbligatos, derived from

[8] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe,* 27.
[9] Ibid., 28.

the Italian term "necessary," were seen as indispensable musical material, yet subordinate to the vocal melody. The eloquent oboe became a perfect partner for the voice in such music, demonstrating its expressive potential by "convey[ing] the emotional force of words."[10] Arias that featured an hautboy in dialogue and imitation with a solo singer were novelties around the turn of the 18th century, not only because of the new instrument itself, but because of an increase in compositions for the solo female voice. The similar tessitura of the hautboy and the female voice related to one another in counterpoint "much like the two treble parts of a trio sonata."[11]

Additional parallels drawn between the hautboy and singing may have come from the instrument's technical limitations. Even early in the history of the hautboy, composers recognized that the instrument lacked the agility and dexterity of its string and keyboard counterparts. Especially before the implementation of keys, the hautboy was especially notorious for splitting notes, and for being unruly in intonation.[12] Johann Adolf Scheibe supports this idea in his treatise, *Critische Musikus*. "In a solo for the violin, a composer can be as extravagant as nature will allow, in order to show off the instrument. But a solo for the hautboy must be more singing, because this instrument is very similar to the voice."[13]

The connection between music and rhetoric, popular within the *seconda prattica* style as a means to communicate language, is also relevant to the oboe's early history. As Burgess and Haynes paraphrase Johann Mattheson, "the new 'speaking' instrument, the hautboy, was an eloquent oboe, in a period when speech was the operative metaphor for music making."[14] As Bruce Haynes observes, the word *eloquent* "captures the eighteenth-century oboe's mellowness and lack of tension, its ability to start and stop instantly, its remarkable capacity to convey and

[10] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 28.
[11] Ibid., 60.
[12] Ibid., 58.
[13] Jeanne Swack, "The Solo Sonatas of Georg Philipp Telemann: A Study of the Sources and Musical Style," 9.
[14] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 28.

impart meaning, to declaim and discourse, to express forcibly and appropriately, to charm, and to provoke."[15]

While French musicians were responsible for the creation of the hautboy, their 17th century use of the instrument was primarily in bands and consorts, like the *Grande Écurie* of the court of Louis XIV. Toward the end of the 17th century, other composers across Europe began to explore the solo hautboy's potential as an obbligato instrument to parallel the voice. The earliest example of surviving music for obbligato hautboy in a vocal aria dates to 1687: Agostino Steffani's "Care soglie a voi mi porto" from the opera, *Alarico*, written for the court in Munich.[16]

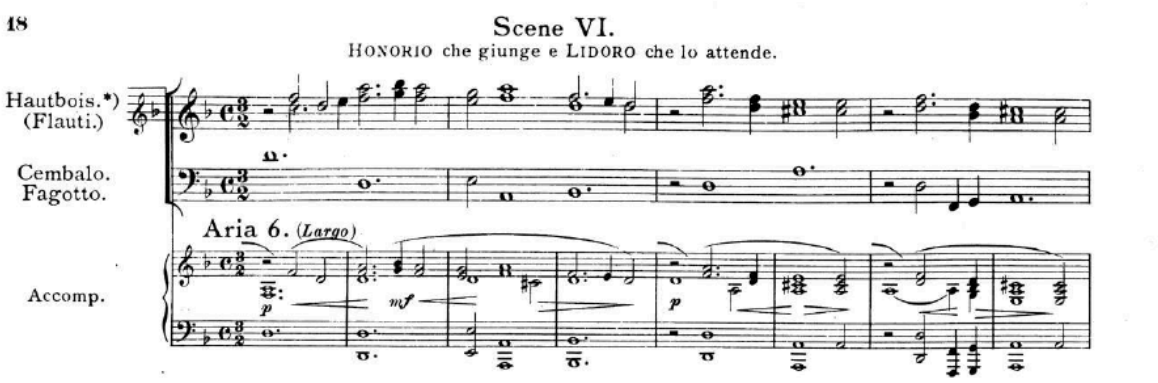

Figure 1.1 - "Care soglie a voi mi porto" mm. 1-8

Steffani wrote obbligato lines like this one (usually for two hautboys) for courts in Hanover and Hamburg over the next decade. Hamburg was an especially cosmopolitan center of the 1690's, drawing musical influences from France and Italy. The newly established Opera in town held permanent positions for oboists by 1695, which encouraged composers to write hautboy obbligatos in opera performances over the next several years. J. S. Bach surely heard many of these operas during his visits to the Hamburg opera in the early 18th century, which likely inspired the oboe's greatest champion in his writing for the instrument in vocal cantatas.[17]

[15] Bruce Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, iv.
[16] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 60.
[17] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 61.

18th Century

The hautboy exploded in popularly as a solo instrument across Europe around the turn of the century. The first thirty years of the 18th century were, in Bruce Haynes's words, "the hautboy's Golden age."[18] The body of work from this period comprises the majority of solo music written for the instrument and provides contemporary performers with a vast collection of material.

Modern musicians learning the music of this era, however, must have an understanding of the context in which it was written. As 20th century American oboist Robert Bloom says, "Eighteenth-century solo works are a unique art form, deliberately left unfinished by the composer (with the notable exception of J. S. Bach) to leave room for collaboration with the performer, who is free to create, but within a narrow and complex code we now refer to as 'performance practices.'"[19] The guidelines to which he is referring are best understood through the writings of several important musicians and scholars during the period.

A primary theme of these writings, largely in the form of treatises written by performing musicians and theorists, connects instrumental practices to the art of singing as well as the art of oration. I will look at treatises from Quantz, Mattheson, Poncein, Hotteterre, Batteux, and others to contextualize how the 18th century hautboy was thought of both as a parallel to the singing voice and as an orator, employing devices of rhetoric to persuade an audience.

Though admittedly, individual instruments were largely seen as interchangeable during this period, proven by the fact that many wind musicians played multiple instruments—Hotteterre played flute, recorder, and hautboy; Gleditsch played hautboy and bassoon—it is still clear from the development of the hautboy as an obbligato instrument that it was seen as a

[18] Bruce Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 275.
[19] Sara Bloom, *The Robert Bloom Collection: Solo Works and Chamber Music for Oboe*, 3.

parallel to the voice. To help better understand this, I will first examine the specific performance practice instructions to help woodwind players achieve a more singing quality through the use of time (tempo, meter, and expressive rubato), articulation, punctuation, and gesturing.

The subject of rhetoric is also crucial to understanding 18th century performance practice. I will examine the principles of classical rhetoric, and how these ideologies informed all musical practices of the 18th century, including instrumental performance. I will outline the relationship between the compositional process and the five offices of rhetoric, describe how the scholars and theorists identified passions within music, and provide some takeaways for a modern performer interpreting Baroque music. For musical context, I will analyze two vocal arias with oboe obbligato by the rhetorical oboe's greatest proponent, Johann Sebastian Bach.

Learning from Singers

"Hence we maintain, in our humble opinion, that the universal axiom of all music, on which we build all other conclusions regarding this science and art, would consist of the following four words: Everything must sing properly."[20]

The language used in the most prominent instrumental treatises of the 18th century is full of imagery related to singing and comparing instrumental practices to vocal practices. These metaphors use a variety of expressive musical devices, such as elements of time, articulation, punctuation, and gesturing to compare instrumental practices to vocal practices. I will examine how this language perpetuates the connections between instrumental and vocal performance.

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) was a scholar and theorist based in Hamburg who contributed one of the most significant treatises of the Baroque era on this subject, *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* (1739). In the introduction to the 1981 English translation of Mattheson's seminal work, Ernst Charles Harriss notes that Mattheson was born into a position

[20] Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, 81.

of privilege and education in the cosmopolitan city of Hamburg, and therefore had a uniquely broad perspective on musical practice throughout Europe. Mattheson's writings largely rejected previous centuries' theories of solmization and pedantic applications of counterpoint for more affect-driven theories of music imitating speech and life.[21]

The very basis of Mattheson's argument lies in his insistence that all music must sing. In order to achieve a singing quality, Mattheson recommends that instrumentalists and composers develop their own skills as singers. "…he who wants to compose or play something well on instruments would necessarily have to understand the art of singing from its foundations." One of the most relevant chapters of *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* to my scholarship explores the differences between vocal and instrumental melodies. "The most familiar difference," Mattheson writes "[is that] instrumentalists do not have any words to deal with, as singers do…" but he stresses that instrumental performers must still "acknowledge the affections."[22]

Another prominent treatise—perhaps the most significant manual for wind players of the 18th century—comes from Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773). Quantz published *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte tranversiere zu spielen* in 1752 as an instructional manual for his pupil, Frederick the Great, on how to play the flute, and become a good musician at the same time. Quantz's writings also show a strong connection between instrumental performance practice and the affections. "Yet instrumental music, without words and human voices, ought to express certain emotions, and should transport the listeners from one emotion to another just as well as vocal music does. And if this is to be accomplished properly, so as to compensate for the lack of words and the human voice, neither the composer nor the performer can be devoid of feeling."[23]

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[21] Mattheson, 1-3.
[22] Ibid., 424.
[23] Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte tranversiere zu spielen*, 310.

Like Mattheson, Quantz suggests that learning to sing can help instrumentalists to develop a more complete musicianship.

> And if he has the opportunity to study the art of singing, either before or at the same time that he studies the flute, I strongly recommend that he do so. Through it he will acquire good execution in his playing so much the more easily; and the insight that the art of singing provides will give him a particularly great advantage in the reasonable embellishment of an Adagio. Then he will not remain just a simple player of the flute, but will be on the way to becoming, in time, a musician in the true sense.[24]

Quantz also goes a step further and claims that singers can learn from imitation of instrumental techniques as well. "Each instrumentalist must strive to execute that which is cantabile as a good singer executes it. The singer, on the other hand, must try in lively pieces to achieve the fire of good instrumentalists, as much as the voice is capable of it."[25]

Notably, far more treatises instructing instrumentalists from the 18th century survive today than those intended for singers. Burgess and Haynes claim the reason that instrumental treatises provide "more detailed information on gracing than vocal tutors may reflect the tendency that instrumentalists learned from printed material, and singers from the example of their masters."[26]

Below, I will outline the writings that support how instrumentalists can use time, articulation, punctuation, and gesturing as expressive musical devices to support a more singing quality.

Time

The idea of time in these writings covers a wide range of expressive musical devices. Mattheson and Quantz discuss issues of tempo, meter, and expressive time taking in their attempt to connect instrumental practice to vocal practice.

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[24] Quantz, 115.
[25] Ibid., 127.
[26] Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 227.

Tempo

Tempo markings that appear at the beginning of a musical score had a different function in the 18th century than they do today. According to Burgess and Haynes, "these markings have always had the dual function of indicating pace and passion, and demonstrate the close connection between speed and affect."[27] A modern performer might interpret an "Allegro" marking as meaning nothing more than "fast" or "Adagio" to mean "slow," but these words carried more than an indication of speed. Rather the speed was determined by the affect itself, which was what these markings were meant to convey. Mattheson drew the following connections between tempo marking and affect: an *Adagio* indicates distress, a *Lamento* lamentation, a *Lento* relief, an *Andante* hope, an *Affetuoso* love, and *Allegro* comfort, and a *Presto* eagerness.[28] Following the tempo indicator of a movement allows the meaning of the text to be conveyed with the appropriate affect.

French musicians also considered how time contributes to a piece's affect, as evidenced by numerous treatises. Jean-Pierre Freillon-Poncein, in his treatise, *On Playing Oboe, Recorder, and Flageolet* (1700) draws the distinction between *movement* (tempo) and *mesuré* (meter)[29] Dance forms in French music were closely connected to tempo, each with a certain speed that would have been widely understood and agreed upon. Music with words, however, depended equally on meter to communicate passions.

Meter

In French vocal music, recitative (*mesuré de recitative*) was notated with mixed meters to reflect the pacing of the poetry, but still allowed the performers a certain rhythmic flexibility within those meters. Poncein believed that "nothing in music is more beautiful than meter.

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[27] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 204.
[28] Mattheson, 426.
[29] Jean-Pierre Freillon-Poncein, *On Playing Oboe, Recorder, and Flageolet,* 73.

Indeed, music is nothing without meter, for through it one may conduct four, five and six parts and a hundred performers without any arriving at the end before the others."[30]

Italian recitative was not denoted with mixed meter, but interpreters of this sung music also understood the flexibility required for an affective performance. Quantz instructs a singer of Italian recitative "not always [to] adhere to the tempo," but rather find the "freedom to express what he is to execute quickly or slowly, as he considers best, and as the words require."[31]

Expressive Time

Burgess and Haynes use the Greek terminology of *chronos* and *kairos* to differentiate between physical time and qualitative time. "Musical time (*chronos)* can unfold only in space; *kairos* must take into consideration the performance environment. Just as orators need to enunciate clearly and pace their speech to the size of the space so that each word can be distinctly heard, musicians need to accommodate their timing to the acoustics of the concert venues so that their musical gestures will not blur into one another and lose intelligibility." [32]

The Baroque era drew to a close before the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the metronome gave performers a true, mechanized sense of *chronos*. Therefore, our modern obsession over chronometric perfection was not relevant to Baroque performers. Rather, theorists before the Industrial Revolution described the concept of *tactus* to express this notion—which was a steady, regular beat based on a "theoretical constant within which musical rhythm operated as mathematical subdivision."[33] This was measured differently by each person and impossible to understand as an objective constant. In performing music from the 18th century, a modern

[30] Poncein, 35.
[31] Quantz, 292.
[32] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 296.
[33] Ibid. 301.

performer should work to release the sense of control inherent in our training and base our expressive timing decisions when performing vocal music on what the text requires.

The flexibility in expressive timing paramount to Baroque music was a predominant reason why conductors appeared less often during this period, only when the size of ensemble or particularly acoustics of a performance space required one. Perhaps non-coincidentally, conductors did not become ubiquitous until after the study of rhetoric fell out of fashion in musical discourse. Mattheson, however, clearly recognized the importance of a well-rounded music director as evidenced by the title of his treatise. In Part 3, Chapter 26, he notes:

> The beat must not only be attentively maintained, but as circumstances demand (as for instance when a skilled singer makes a fine ornament) the director can and should make a small exception in the movement, giving way and delaying the beat, or also, in accommodating the passion or for other reasons, make the beat faster or stronger than before.[34]

Here, Mattheson clearly describes the need for expressive timing, even within a large ensemble, to convey the appropriate affect of the music.

Giulio Caccini, a composer instrumental to the creation of monody as a musical expression of text, describes the related, but slightly more broad concept of *sprezzatura* as an elegant casualness unconstrained by the literal notes written on the page. Burgess and Haynes quote Caccini from the introduction to his collection of songs, *Le nuove musiche*. Caccini notes, "I call that the *Noble manner of Singing,* which is used without tying a man's self to the ordinary measure of Time, making many times the Value of the Notes less by half, and sometimes more, according to the conceit of the words; whence proceeds that excellent kind of Singing with a graceful *sprezzatura*, whereof I have spoken before."[35]

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[34] Mattheson, 860.
[35] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician,* 311.

Articulation

Articulation in 18th century wind playing had a stronger connection to language than it does today. Of all the musical tools of expressivity understood by modern performers, the use of articulation—parallel to the idea of punctuation in language—differs the most strikingly between contemporary and Rhetorical approaches to verbal and musical performance. Jean-Pierre Freillon-Poncein was one of the first theorists to discuss how tonguing style on the flute, recorder, and oboe can help achieve the proper stylistic lilt of French dance music. Musicians were expected to understand the hierarchy of strong and weak beats related to idea of *notes inégales*. Poncein suggests tonguing the reed with a *tu* syllable on downbeats, followed by a combination of *tu ru* (short, long) to achieve the skipping quality of *notes inégales*.[36]

Poncein's work, intended primarily for amateur performers, was eclipsed by the more famous treaty of Jacques Hotteterre "Le Romain" (1673-1763) published later in the decade. Hotteterre was part of a famous family of instrument makers, who were engaged in the prototypical designing of the oboe. Jacques, and other members of his family including his father and brothers were employed by the French court, holding positions in the *Grand Écurie*, serving under both Louis XIV and Louis XV.

In *Principles of the Flute, Recorder, and Oboe* (1707), Hotteterre discusses articulation along similar terms to Poncein, also addressing how the use of syllables *tu* and *ru* can support *inégales* style, determined by the number of notes in a passage. "When the number [of quavers] is odd, you pronounce *tu ru* in succession, as in the first example. When it is even, you pronounce *tu* on the first two quavers, then alternate it with *ru*"[37]

[36] Poncein, 23.
[37] Hotteterre, 60.

Quantz outlines articulations in his treatise as well, but rather uses the syllables *ti,* and *ri* (or *di*) as well as *did'll*, which is meant for fast articulation (though he claims that this tonguing pattern—double tonguing as we now understand it—was not possible on the hautboy).[38] This specificity of articulation seemingly disappeared after the Baroque period, which further supports the connection between wind playing and speech during this time. Quantz's opening paragraph of the chapter concerning articulation reinforces this notion. "It is the [tongue] which must animate the expression of the passions in pieces of every sort, whatever they may be: sublime or melancholy, gay or pleasing."[39]

Punctuation

Connected to both time and articulation is the expressive device of punctuation. Proper punctuation when observed by wind players, is another tool to help imitate singing. Recitative most closely resembled the rhythm of speech and therefore required more careful detail to punctuation. An eloquent performance depended on the singer's ability to pace the delivery of the text with proper punctuation and silences.

Mattheson felt that punctuation was essential to provide meaning within a musical composition. In Part 2, Chapter 9 of *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, he observes the inflections of colloquial speech, i.e. the rising of the voice at the end of a question statement. He also considers the various punctuation marks in written language—commas, semicolons, parentheses, etc.—and how they might be translated into musical phrasing.[40]

The importance of properly punctuated speech to break up thoughts and gestures parallels the function of breathing for singers and wind players. Some composers, like Bach, don't create

[38] Quantz, 85.
[39] Ibid., 71.
[40] Mattheson, 380.

obvious places in the score—at a modern performer's first glance—for breaths. I will later examine the opening statement in "Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten" (Figure 1.2).

Mattheson explains, perhaps with hyperbolic urgency, that singers must plan their breathing carefully to avoid interfering with the text.

> If a melody [loses] its flowing character because of frequent stops, then it is easy to see that one has reason not to use such interruptions frequently. The first and most important abuse in singing may well be when through too frequent and untimely breathing the words and thoughts of the performance are separated, and the flow is interrupted or broken.[41]

Quantz must have also seen improper breathing as a cardinal sin. He extends the urgent warning to wind players as well.

> Taking breath at the proper time is essential in playing wind instruments as well as in singing. Because of frequently encountered abuses in this regard, melodies that should be coherent are often broken up, the composition is spoiled, and the listener is robbed of part of his pleasure. To separate several notes that belong together is just as bad as to take a breath in reading [words] before the sense is clear, or in the middle of a word of two or three syllables. While separation of this kind is not met with in reading, it is unfortunately all too common among wind players.[42]

On the other side of this argument, both Quantz and Mattheson cautioned against overly connected instrumental lines. Quantz advised wind players in particular not to "connect their sound without pause like a hurdy-gurdy,"[43] stressing that gestures need space between them to distinguish and add clarity. "Breath must be taken before the repetition of the principal subject or the beginning of the new idea, so that the end of the preceding idea and the beginning of the one that follows are clearly separated from one another."[44] Mattheson also stressed a need to balance stylistically appropriate punctuation with cantabile singing. In his discussion on the differences between instrumental and vocal melodies, he notes that "vocal [melodies do] not permit such an

[41] Mattheson, 265.
[42] Quantz, 87.
[43] Ibid., 90.
[44] Ibid., 88.

impetuous, punctuated nature, as [do] the instrumental," which shows that he was also conscious of over-punctuating a melody.[45]

Gesturing

The art of gesticulation is hardly part of a modern instrumentalist's education, yet 18th century theorists saw it as useful tool for instrumental performers as well as singers. Mattheson believed that "gesticulation, words, and sounds [should] form a three-part braid, and perfectly harmonize with each other to the goal that the feeling of the listener be stirred."[46] Charles Batteux, a French philosopher supported this idea in his 1746 book, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (*The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*). Batteux identifies the three means to express ideas and feelings: word, tone, and gesture.

> I have cited the word first because it possesses the highest rank and because it is ordinarily given the most attention. Nevertheless, the tones of the voice and gestures have many advantages over the word. Their use is more natural; we have recourse to them when words fail us. Moreover, they are a universal interpreter that can take us to the ends of the earth and render us intelligible to the most barbaric nations and even to animals…tone and gesture are media of the heart; they move us, win us over, persuade us.[47]

Words alone are certainly capable of expressing the passions, but without a particular tone of voice or gesture, they may express an idea rather than a sentiment. Speech is a matter of reason, but gesture is a matter of the heart. "Words do not move a person who does not understand the language…but everyone understands the well-used facial expression, even young children with whom neither words nor beatings have as much effect as a glance."[48]

These writings about gesture may seem more closely connected to the art of acting than instrumental performance. Acting is rarely part of the instrumentalist's training, yet some of the

[45] Mattheson, 422.
[46] Ibid., 137.
[47] Charles Batteux, *Les beaux arts*, 253-255.
[48] Mattheson, 133.

most skilled performers know how to take advantage of the fact that audiences listen with their eyes as well as their ears. Visible, gestural, ensemble cues—like a flutist's cut-off, a violinist's dramatic up bow, or a singer's breath in time—may engage an audience with a glimpse into the collaborative process.

Beyond these pragmatic gestures in instrumental ensembles, however, Burgess and Haynes describe how instrumentalists might learn more about the eloquent art of gesturing from collaborations with singers rather than only other instrumentalists. "Instrumental obbligatos should be treated as equals to the vocal line, and musicians should be just as conscious of their bearing, movement, gestures, and facial expressions as the singers. Instrumental-vocal duets are a wonderful place for musicians to learn the art of eloquent gesture."[49]

Instrumentalists are rarely critiqued for their gesturing unless an obvious tic becomes a distraction to the performance. As Hotteterre points out, it is possible of creating a distraction by moving too much in marking time with the body. The "highly valued attitude [of restraining head and body movement to keep time] is extremely gracious, and engages the eyes no less than the sound of the instrument pleasantly caresses the ear."[50]

Speaking more directly to oboists in particular, Quantz, Poncein, and Hotteterre each address the physical strain associated with playing the instrument. Poncein insists that playing the oboe "is to be done without making any grimaces or movements of any part of the body. I say this, because often without intending it one falls into certain habits and contortions which it is almost impossible to correct. This is very disagreeable to the persons before whom one plays."[51]

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[49] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 353.
[50] Hotteterre, 35.
[51] Poncein, 10.

Quantz warns against making unpleasant or irrelevant facial expressions that conflict with the passions the music is meant to express. “No matter how difficult the notes performed may be, this difficulty must not be apparent in their performer. Everything of a coarse, forced disposition in singing and playing must be avoided with great care. You must guard against all grimaces and, as much as possible, try to preserve in yourself a constant composure.”[52]

Maintaining “constant composure” while playing a difficult instrument, communicating with collaborators, and expressing passions to an audience is difficult. Quantz suggests that this is best achieved through the art of simulation, which he believes to be “not only permissible, but most necessary, [doing] no offence to morals. He who strives all his life to master his passions as fully as possible will not find it difficult to counterfeit in himself the passion required in the piece to be performed. Only then will he play well and as though from the soul.”[53]

As Burgess and Haynes point out, Quantz himself would have been familiar with the art of feigning especially in the context of his relationship with his royal pupil, Frederick King of Prussia. Quantz could easily outshine Frederick in performance, but likely would have observed proper court etiquette and feigned submissive admiration.[54]

Even in his chapter of *Versuch* intended for beginning performers, Quantz stresses the importance of simulation. “For if he is not himself moved by what he plays, he cannot hope for any profit from his efforts, and he will never move others through his playing, which should be his real aim.”[55]

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[52] Quantz, 124.
[53] Ibid., 273.
[54] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 368.
[55] Quantz, 159.

Learning from the Principles of Classical Rhetoric

As we can clearly see from the words of Quantz, Mattheson, and others, woodwind playing instruction was largely intended to help instrumentalists emulate singers. Beyond merely imitating the human voice as an instrument, however, it is clear in these writings that the instrumental performer was responsible for communicating musical *affects* through a well-studied knowledge of rhetoric.

The parallel between music and rhetoric was first made in ancient times, describing the effect rhythm and tessitura have on the listener. As ancient Greek texts were revisited during the Renaissance period, composers and performers would have considered the rhetorical techniques of eloquence and oratory in their performance, as it would have applied to speech, to facilitate effective communication with audiences. The connection of music and rhetoric in 18th century vocal music was preoccupied with the impact of musical styles on the clarity and meaning of words. The goals of the Florentine Camerata support this notion in their embracing of monody and rejection of polyphony. "The union of music with rhetorical principles is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Baroque musical rationalism and gave shape to the progressive elements in the music theory and aesthetics of the period."[56]

Classical rhetoric, as part of a humanistic education, has all but vanished in contemporary teaching. However, its relationship to the arts was so synonymous in the 16th through 18th centuries that it's impossible to ignore when examining the performance practice of the time. "An entire discipline that had once been the common property of every educated man has had to be rediscovered and reconstructed during the intervening decades, and only now is it beginning to be understood how much Western art music has depended on rhetorical concepts."[57]

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[56] Grove, "Rhetoric and Music."
[57] Ibid.

Judy Tarling's *Weapons of Rhetoric*, provides an excellent guide to contemporary performers in their quest to understand the rhetorical foundations in music of the Renaissance and Baroque eras. Tarling's working definition of rhetoric, based on a variety of ancient teachings, stands as the following: "art or a skill with the purpose of persuasion using the tools of eloquence: clarity, variety, and decoration to stimulate emotional response, accompanied by impressive delivery"[58]

Music to 18th century audiences was not simply just beautiful or passive, but it incited a certain response based on the *affect*—the "abstract idea of a rationalized emotional state or passion"—it portrayed.[59] These affects were the point of interest, rather than the performer's personal feelings. Musical rhetorical figures were meant to decorate and embellish the affective representation and add dramatic stress to the text, like figures of speech in oratory. All musical elements were considered through the affects they portrayed.

Eighteenth century musicians and theorists used terminology from oration and rhetoric to describe music, in terms we still understand today—meter, gesture, tone, period, rhythm, etc.—further highlighting the close connection between these disciplines. Even instrumental music was considered to be a "kind of wordless oration whose purpose was to move the listener."[60] Quantz dedicates an entire chapter of *Versuch* to exploring this connection. The opening paragraph of Chapter 11, "Of Good Execution in General in Singing and Playing" reads:

> The orator and the musician have, at bottom, the same aim in regard to both the preparation and the final execution of their productions, namely to make themselves masters of the hearts of their listeners, to arouse or still their passions, and to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that. Thus it is advantageous to both, if each has some knowledge of the duties of the other.[61]

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[58] Judy Tarling, *Weapons of Rhetoric*, 4.
[59] Grove, "Rhetoric and Music."
[60] Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric,* 4.
[61] Quantz, 119.

17th and 18th century thinkers indeed saw minimal difference between the persuasive goals of the orator and the musician. Charles Batteux, in his 1765 treatise, *Cours de belles lettres*, outlines three aspects to effective persuasion. "Now to persuade men, it is necessary to prove, to please, and to move. Sometimes one of these means alone is sufficient, sometimes it is necessary to join all three. We prove by arguments, we please by morals, and we move by the passions."[62]

The translation of the title of Quantz's eleventh chapter—Of Good *Execution*—might lead a modern reader to believe Quantz was stressing the importance of good vocal and instrumental technique. However, a closer analysis of the content inside shows that Quantz believes a musician's power of persuasion comes not from technical prowess, but rather the ability to move an audience at a more fundamental level. Burgess and Haynes, the authors of *The Pathetick Musician*, point out that Reilly's translation of the German *Vortrag* to mean "execution" reflects a mid 20th century perspective on what Quantz was trying to capture in this chapter. This rendering gives the instructions of the chapter a technical slant, which does not explain the ultimate goal of Quantz to abet eloquence in performers. Fortunately, Quantz wrote the book in two languages—first in German and then translated to French, where he uses the word *expression*. By comparing both the terms in both languages, we are able to understand Quantz's meaning. "As well as the rhetorical connotation implied by the German term, the French version clarifies that what Quantz was talking about was not so much technical execution but the expressive artistry of musical eloquence."[63]

When considering the Quantz's guidance, it is important to keep in mind that composers and performers were often the same person. Even in cases where they weren't, the division of

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[62] Charles Batteux, *Cours de belles lettres*, 21.
[63] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 358-59.

labor between these roles was far less stark than it is today. "The good effect of a piece of music depends almost as much upon the performer as upon the composer himself. The best composition may be marred by poor execution, just as a mediocre composition may be improved and enhanced by good execution."[64] The roles of composer, performer, and audience in the development of 18th century music are mirrored in the structuring of a good rhetorical argument by the classical Greek scholars. I will next explore these parallels by examining the five offices of rhetoric, as explained by Burgess, Haynes, and Tarling.

Offices of Rhetoric

The five offices of rhetoric, as outlined by the 1st century Greek scholar, Quintillian, around 35 B.C.E, connect to 18th century musical composition and performance: **Invention** (inventio), **arrangement** (disposition), **decoration** (elocutio), **memorization** (memoria), and **delivery** (actio).[65]

Inventio—This first office of rhetoric is entirely in the domain of the composer; *inventio* can be described more easily than taught or learned. According to Mattheson, it "depends mostly upon an innate quality of the mind and the fortuitous disposition of the cells in the brain…[and] does not always depend on our will."[66] One might be tempted to draw a parallel to the idea of a composer-as-genius, but Burgess and Haynes warn against that rationale. The duties of the job under patronage in the time of Bach did not allow time for inspiration to dictate the pace of compositional output. Inventio was more practical and less mystical to the rhetorician.[67]

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[64] Quantz, 120.
[65] Tarling, 2.
[66] Mattheson, 281.
[67] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 80-81.

Dispositio—Still under the responsibility of the composer, *dispositio* covers the aspects of theme, key, and meter. Here the composer sets text to music and puts large scale formal structures in place as well. From Mattheson's description of *dispositio*, it's clear that composers of the rhetorical style made these decisions based primarily on the affect they were trying to convey.[68]

Elocutio—*Elocutio* now enters the territory of the performer. As Quantz notes, attempts to perfect the expression of the passions in the art of composition "would be of little use… if [similar efforts] were not made into the art of performance (*exécution*)"[69] *Elocutio* covers matters of technique and style, including the elements a modern performer would label as "performance practice." Instrumentation is also part of *elocutio* since most composers left that decision up to the performer (though J. S. Bach is a notable exception).

Memoria—This office outlines more than just rote memorization—it is the ability to remember all the learned and culturally experienced elements of improvisation, composition, and ornamentation. Memoria represents an integral component in both the compositional and performative elements of music, as the composer must create the framework for performers to improvise and ornament according to their learned and cultural experiences. This is probably the office of rhetoric least familiar to and hardest to master for modern performers.

Actio—*Actio* covers all performative aspects not covered by elocutio and memoria, mainly the ability of performer to interact with the audience. "It addresses the performer's duty to integrate all the elements of the work."[70]

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[68] Mattheson, 283.
[69] Quantz, 205.
[70] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 83.

Outlining the offices of rhetoric shows the roles and responsibilities of the composer, performer, and audience. Effective oration, as well as musical performance, relies on a composer/writer, a performer/speaker, and an audience. All parties must be privy to their role in the process, as well as aware of the relationship to the others. Burgess and Haynes provide further context for how this symbiotic relationship functioned in 18th century performing.

> Baroque music was not 'Art' (with a capital A) in the modern sense, created in the abstract, to be performed at some unspecified future time, and possibly incomprehensible on first hearing. It took place in the here and now (or the 'there and then'), created for a specific event and a known audience, tailor-made, so to speak, rather than off the rack. That applied not only to the composition but to the way the performer interacted with the audience.[71]

It's clear that both Quantz and Mattheson considered their audiences thusly. Regarding choosing repertoire for a program, Quantz notes,

> Anyone who wishes to be heard publicly must consider his listeners well, especially those whom it is most important that he please. He must consider whether or not they are connoisseurs. Before connoisseurs he can play something a little more elaborate, in which he has the opportunity to show his skill in both the Allegro and the Adagio. But before pure amateurs, who understand nothing of music, he will do better to produce those pieces in which the melody is brilliant and pleasing. To avoid boring such amateurs, he may also take the Adagio a little more quickly than usual.[72]

Similarly, Mattheson shows how considering audience temperament was crucial to his sense of an affective performance. "It is much easier to perform something pleasing at the homes and courts of great nobles than at large gatherings: for one has only to examine the temperament of the nobles and to probe their sensitive side, then everything else is ordered according to the tastes of the most noble."[73]

Both Quantz and Mattheson's thoughts on how composers and performances should adhere to the desires of their audiences might seem to a modern sensibility like pandering. While

[71] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 339.
[72] Quantz, 200.
[73] Mattheson, 263.

the idea of audience sovereignty is antithetical to how 21st century audiences participate in performances, 18th century audiences considered themselves "in charge" of performance events, paying attention and socializing freely at their own pleasure. Performers were expected to win over the attention of their audiences extemporaneously rather than through advanced publicity or reputation. Thus, a commanding performance required an empathy to the tastes and needs of one's audience. "Performing a musical work, then, is not a single, set enterprise but a moving target."[74]

Identifying passions

In order for composers and performers to achieve their goal of eloquent persuasion, and for the audience to be persuaded themselves, each must understand the passions that the music represents. Philosophers for many centuries have listed the passions inherent in art and oratory. Mattheson, who felt a truly comprehensive list would be tedious, included a succinct list in *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*: Love, Lust, Sadness, Joy, Pride, Humility, Stubbornness, Anger, Jealousy, Hope, Horror, Charm, Disagreeability, Despair, Pity, and Composure.[75]

Quantz details four considerations when determining the nature of the passions to be expressed by a performer:

1. Key – major (gay, bold, serious, and sublime) or minor (flattering, melancholy, tender)

2. Intervals – Intervallic relationships of notes (large or small) and articulations (slurred or articulated) The passions associated with minor keys are more often characterized by small intervals and legato articulations, major keys more often by "brief articulated notes, or those forming distant leaps, as well as by figures in which dots appear regularly after the second note."

3. Dissonances – the stronger dissonances "must be struck with greater force than the others"[76]

[74] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 349.
[75] Mattheson, 114-121.
[76] Quantz, 255.

4. Tempo indication at beginning of movement (these markings in the 18th century described more of an emotional characteristic than an indication of speed)[77]

Of course, one single passion is not capable of expressing the complexity of the human condition. Humans may feel multiple emotions at once and they may be constantly evolving. According to Quantz, "each piece…may have in it diverse mixtures of pathetic, flattering, gay, majestic, or jocular ideas. Hence you must, so to speak, adopt a different sentiment at each bar, so that you can imagine yourself now melancholy, now gay, now serious, etc. Such dissembling is most necessary in music."[78] He goes on to instruct, "and since in the majority of pieces one passion constantly alternates with another, the performer must know how to judge the nature of the passion which each idea contains, and constantly make his execution conform to it."[79] Burgess and Haynes use the term "passion constellations"[80] to illustrate the spectrum of emotions beyond basic categories of happiness, sadness, anger, etc. Indeed, some of the best rhetorical composers, like J. S. Bach, explored subject material that required complex passion constellations. I will expand on this in my discussion of Bach's "Ich habe genug" (Figure 1.4).

Burgess and Haynes organize the musical figures that can express passions into two fundamental categories: *hypotyposis,* or imagery of the physical world, and *pathopoeia*, or internal emotional passions. Hypotyposis in music might describe an exterior scene or object—i.e. falling rain or a swelling wave—while pathopoeia represents internal emotional passions, like melancholy or joy.[81]

Another way musical figures can evoke specific passions lies in the difference between denotation and connotation. Denoting a scene of two lovers—to borrow Burgess and Hayne's

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[77] Quantz, 125-6.
[78] Ibid., 126.
[79] Ibid., 125.
[80] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 104.
[81] Ibid., 93.

metaphor—is more easily expressed with words than music. It's difficult to convey musically the physical attributes of the lovers and their surroundings (i.e. "his brown hair shines in the autumn sun") but the *connotation* of two people falling in love can be beautifully expressed and universally understood through music.[82]

Takeaways

There are many rhetorical figures in music that one can analyze, but they are not easily definable by universal definition. The idea of categorizing all such figures while considering the context in which they were used—across shifting national trends and throughout diverse geographic locations—seems insurmountable and impractical. For centuries, scholars have attempted to label and analyze the use of specific rhetorical devices in music—from Joachim Burmeister's *Musical Poetics* (1606) to Dietrich Bartel's *Musica Poetica* (1997)—to varying degrees of approval. Even Mattheson's comparatively brief foray into this subject offended some of his contemporaries. Though he and others may have extended the metaphor too far, the benefit of such analysis was clear to many composers into the 19th century. Both Haydn and Beethoven were known to have copies of *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*.

As a 21st century musician, I found the works of Judy Tarling and Geoffrey Burgess/Bruce Haynes to be remarkably helpful in providing an 18th century context to rhetorical music. "Modern-trained musicians are often hesitant to approach early music because they lack the rules—the game plan—as it were. But the quest for foolproof style guidelines confuses interpretation with correctness and accuracy. Likewise, the 'rules' of Classical rhetoric are no sure recipe for a successful performance: they can only serve as guidance in the process of

[82] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 43-44.

achieving eloquence."[83] I found reassurance in those words, as well as in this advice from Tarling. "In drawing direct comparisons between spoken rhetoric and musical rhetoric, a flexible and imaginative attitude needs to be adopted, so that seeking to match rhetorical terms with musical situations does not become a rigid and purposeless exercise."[84] Burgess and Haynes seem to agree:

> Naming and categorizing passions expressed in music is not a pointless intellectual exercise, nor does it necessarily diminish the mysterious power that we might sense in a piece of music. The reluctance to put words to music is another hangover from Romantic sensibility that elevated music beyond verbal description. Recognizing the passion in a musical work clarifies and reinforces our intentions of what should be brought out in performance. It also provides a means of communicating our intentions to our fellow performers and to our listeners.[85]

While I do not explore specific rhetorical musical devices in this discussion, I hope to show how understanding of Baroque music's inherently rhetorical structure benefits performance practice, particularly for instrumentalists. For me, a deeper understanding of this confluence has informed my practice of collaborating with singers. This body of knowledge provides a lens through which to see contemporary practices, particularly with regards to the original music I will present in the second half of this paper. This lens better frames instrumental music as a language meant to communicate meaning and can contribute to both more eloquent performance practice as an oboist and better contextual analysis of vocal music. Though I'm not sure that applying rhetorical concepts to 21st century music is always productive, it is a concrete way to connect extramusical meaning to instrumental music when considering the dynamic of the time period when the oboe was invented.

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[83] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 17.
[84] Tarling, 193.
[85] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 101.

J. S. Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach has written more music for the oboe than any other composer in history. In fact, he wrote more than twice as many oboe solos in his cantatas as he did for any other instrument. Among his approximately 200 extant cantatas, 173 arias feature an oboe obbligato. Beyond the treble oboe, he also championed the use of other members of the oboe family—the oboe d'amore, oboe da caccia, and taille, using those instruments primarily in soloist roles. We can attribute Bach's increased use of these instruments—some of which would be completely unheard of today without Bach's writing for them—to the development of these instruments by the woodwind makers active in Leipzig around the time of Bach's arrival.[86]

Many scholars have examined Bach's use of rhetorical devices in his music. Though Bach himself never directly stated how he applied the principles of rhetoric to his music, the connections are clear. A contemporary of Mattheson, Bach likely had a similar education and would have been familiar with the use of rhetorical musical devices.

Bach's instrumental writing seems first and foremost meant to highlight the text. An anecdotal quote from one of Bach's students, Johann Gotthilf Ziegler, highlights Bach's attitude toward the influence of a text on the performance of his organ chorales. "As concerning the playing of chorales, I was instructed by my master, the Capellmeister Bach, who is still living, not to play the songs merely off hand but according to the sense of the words."[87]

The instances in which Bach wrote for the oboe as an obbligato instrument in vocal arias demonstrate an imaginative treatment of the instrument. John Denton, in his dissertation "The Use of Oboes in the Church Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach," outlines four defining characteristics of Bach's oboe writing in solo arias:

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[86] Bruce Haynes, *Music for Oboe, 1650 to 1800: A Bibliography*, 28-61.
[87] John Denton, "The Use of Oboes in the Church Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach," 166.

1. More decorative than melodic (in Bach's early cantatas) suggesting that the oboe itself was not initially seen as an active participant, emphasizes "short, motivic figures that are treated in a sequential fashion within a narrow range."

2. Extremely decorative and ornamental lines, often using small-value notes in a slow tempo, usually conjunct or disjunct outlining triads

3. Simple melodic lines, outlining triads and containing poignant appoggiaturas/non-chord tones

4. Parts in fast tempos with moving sixteenth notes, largely in conjunct motion with some leaps[88]

The simplicity of Bach's oboe writing in Denton's first characteristic ("more decorative than melodic") compared with the others, illustrates how his approach to the oboe evolved over the course of his career. As he wrote more for the instrument, particularly for his Leipzig oboists, Johann Kaspar Gleditsch and Johann Gottfried Kornagel, his writing less mirrored the violin as it did during his Weimar and Cöthen years, and became more like the voice.[89] Gleditsch in particular supported new music, and worked under Bach as a Stadtpfeifer (professional musician employed by civic authorities), playing multiple wind instruments, for nearly 25 years.[90]

Denton also notes that Bach's writing for the oboe suggests he viewed it as a versatile instrument, capable of expressing a variety of passions. The texts of arias scored for oboe solo exhibit passions ranging from "expressions of death, sorrow, pain, sadness, conflict, faithfulness, love, joy, praise, and comfort."[91]

I will examine two of Bach's most famous oboe solos: the obbligato solo from the opening arias in cantatas BWV 202 and 82.

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[88] Denton, 43-48.
[89] Ibid., 56-58.
[90] Ibid., 30.
[91] Ibid., 170.

Wedding Cantata, BWV 202

"*Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten*"

Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten	Retreat, gloomy shadows*;*
Frost und Winde, geht zur Ruh!	Frost and wind, go to rest!
Florens Lust	Flora's delight
Will der Brust	Will grant the breast
Nichts als frohes Glück verstatten,	Nothing but good fortune*,*
Denn sie träget Blumen zu.	For she brings flowers.[92]

This cantata is an anomaly in Bach's oeuvre. It survives only in a manuscript copy from 1730 in an outdated notation style that Bach used during his years as *Konzertmeister* in Weimar, before 1714. However, the oboe writing is quite decorative and ornamental, which is more typical of Bach's style in Leipzig. As mentioned above, Bach's earlier writing for the oboe was characterized by short, motivic figures rather than long, florid lines.

The text of this aria, as mirrored by the instrumental writing, evokes the imagery of spring, depicting "the vanishing of wintry shadows in rising chord sequences" [93] in the upward, arpeggiated string lines. The oboe languishes in a beautiful, simple G major melody that melds seamlessly into a soprano-oboe duet at the entrance of the voice in m. 5.

[92] Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach: With Their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text*, 892.
[93] Ibid., 894.

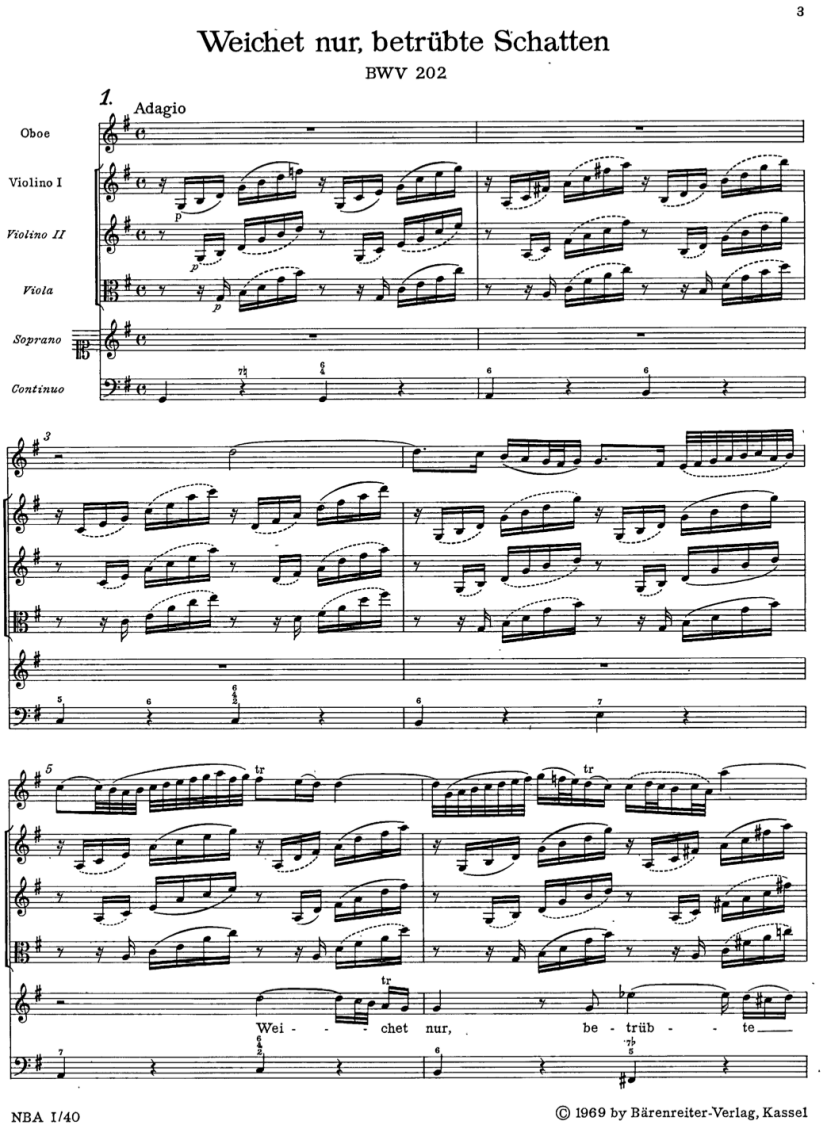

Figure 1.2 - "Weichet nur betrübte Schatten" mm. 1-6

Bach's use of hypotyposis is apparent in this movement in his use of musical figures to denote the coming of spring. In the opening A section, he highlights unexpected harmonies, further from the G major center, on the particular words connected to winter imagery, *betrübte Schatten*, *Frost*, and *Winde* in the soprano's melody, followed by the oboe. As the Adagio section cadences nicely with the wintry weather going to rest (*geht zur Ruh*), the tempo picks up to a lively Andante with detached eighth-note string accompaniment. The soprano sings a more active melody to highlight the delight of Flora and her gifts of good fortune. The oboe, strings,

and voice exchange a dialogue of sighing figures on *träget* (*zu*) in mm. 32-33 as Flora "brings" a full bloom of spring flowers.

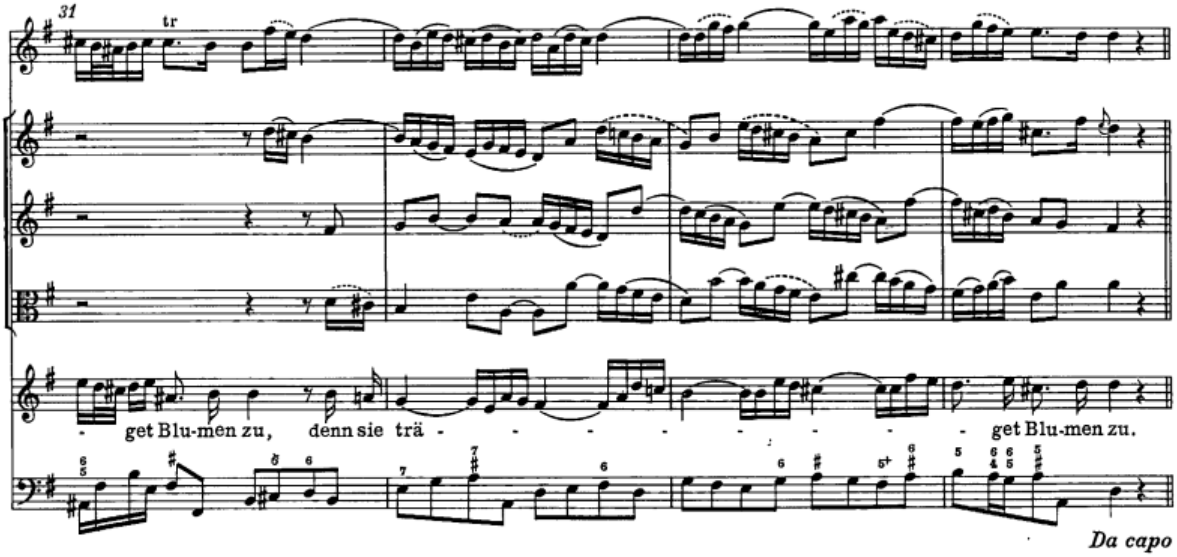

Figure 1.3 - "Weichet nur betrübte Schatten" mm. 31-34

The opening hautboy ritornello does not have notated breaths, which is common in Bach's oboe writing. However, playing the whole phrase from mm. 3-9 at an Adagio tempo is not feasible. It is assumed that oboists take breaths as needed, while not, as Mattheson warned, "too frequent and untimely [so the] thoughts of the performance are separated, and the flow is interrupted or broken."[94] Breathing at the end of long sustained pitches, i.e. at the end of m. 5 or m. 6, while not coming in late after the tie, is the most common performance practice.

[94] Mattheson, 265.

Ich habe genug, BWV 82

Ich habe genung.	I have enough.
Ich habe den Heiland, das Hoffen der. Frommen,	I have taken the Saviour, the hope of the devout,
Auf meine begierigen Arme genommen;	Into my eager arms;
Ich habe genung!	I have enough!
Ich hab ihn erblickt,	I have seen Him,
Mein Glaube hat Jesum ans Herze gedrückt	My faith has pressed Jesus to my heart.[95]

While "Weichut nur" illustrates Bach's use of hypotyposis, the text of "Ich habe genug" lends itself more to a connotative text setting. This aria shows the complexity of human emotions, or "passion constellations" as Burgess and Haynes might say.

The soloist in this aria, a bass, represents Simeon, who having just seen the risen Savior, feels a joyful acceptance of his own mortality. Simeon's feelings "couple reconciliation with ecstatic rapture," which Bach supports by "elaborating the melancholic underlying musical structure with uplifting activity in foreground ornaments."[96]

The movement begins with an eloquent oboe melody over a gently agitated, meandering string accompaniment. As Alfred Dürr points out, the oboe's ascending minor sixth "recalls related themes in the aria 'Erbarme dich' from the *St. Matthew Passion* and the duet 'Wenn kommst du, mein Heil' from the cantata *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140. This makes it clear that, bound up with the glad gratitude of 'I have enough', is the yearning desire 'to depart from here this very day with joy'"[97] This paradoxical contradiction, that through death comes

[95] Dürr, 661-2.
[96] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 245.
[97] Dürr, 663.

eternal life, is a central theme of Christianity that Bach expressed musically in hundreds of pieces.

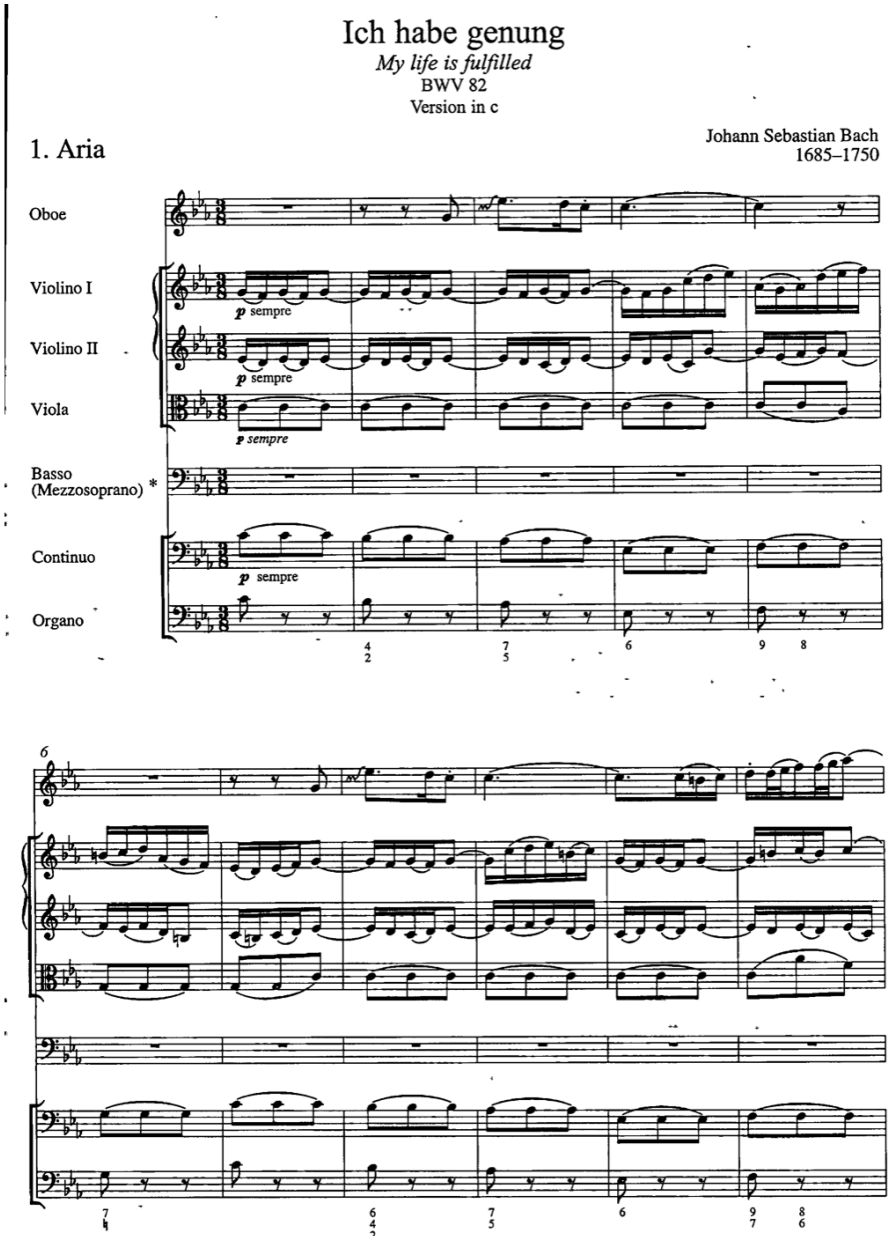

Figure 1.4 - "Ich habe genug" mm. 1-11

Mattheson instructs in *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* that instrumentalists playing obbligato melodies—especially when introducing themes or providing rest for the singer—have

a more "lively movement" than the singer, who should be more restrained.[98] Perhaps this accounts for Bach's detailed ornamentation in the hautboy part.

Burgess and Haynes point to this particular oboe obbligato when discussing Bach's propensity to print his own ornaments. By drawing the comparison to Bach's realization of the Adagio movement of Marcello's Oboe Concerto—the meticulously ornamented version most commonly performed today—they hypothesize what an unadorned version of the oboe line in "Ich habe genug" might look like. For me, this exercise is quite helpful in prioritizing the larger harmonic structure and not getting caught up in the smaller, ornamental gestures.

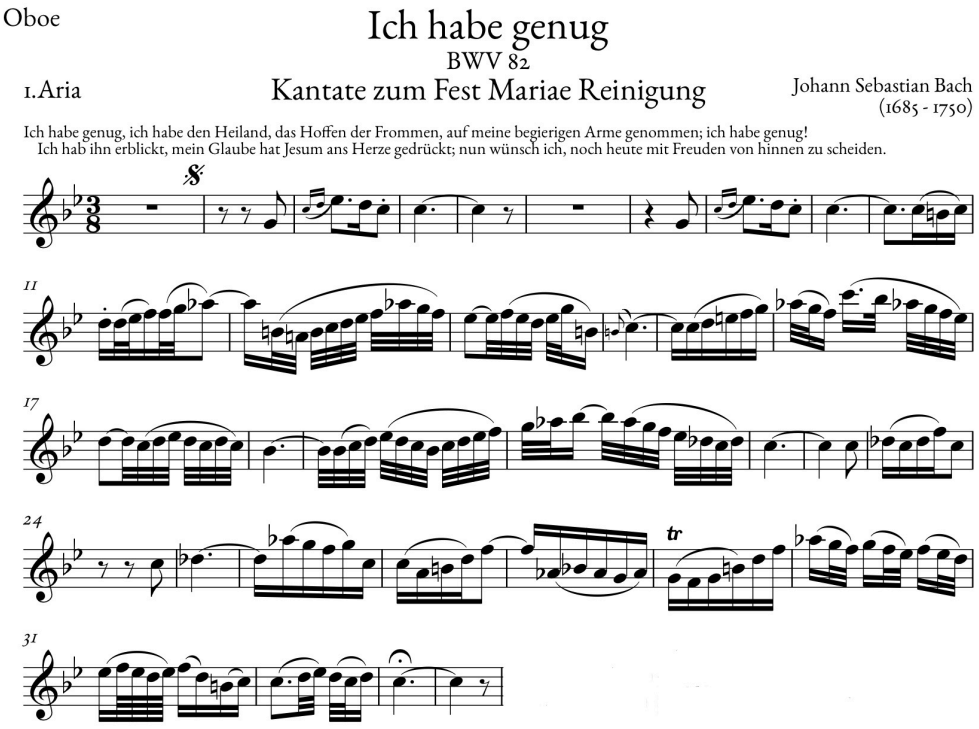

Figure 1.5 - "Ich habe genug" oboe part mm. 1-34

[98] Mattheson, 420-21.

Bridging Rhetoric and Romanticism: The Classical Era

As the 18th century came to a close, a new style of music was coming into favor. The Classical period marks the end of Baroque sensibility. For the oboe and the voice, the main themes of this period are marked by a transition away from rhetoric, a preference toward longer phrasing, and the rise of the virtuoso.

Decline in rhetoric

Music based on the principles of rhetoric music was in steady decline toward the end of the 18th century as scholars and philosophers began focusing on the aesthetics of music above its power of persuasion. Any lingering conversations about rhetoric in the Classical era centered almost exclusively on delivery and execution.

After 1750, opera was no longer composed expressively for, or perceived by audiences as using, the purpose of persuasion, which took away some of the power of rhetoric in musical language. Emerging styles of comic opera, like the Italian *opera buffa* and the French *opéra comique*, contained sung elements that were not contingent on communicating specific text—exclamations, interruptions, shouting, groaning, weeping and laughing. "Affections were no longer considered universal emotional states subject to codification according to rational principles. Instead, the passions were held to be highly changeable and uniquely individual, and the conventionalized representations of the affects found in earlier works began to seem stereotyped and unnaturally static."[99]

Longer phrases

While the oboe is uniquely suited to portraying speech and sung text in the articulated Baroque style, its highly pressurized air stream is also ideal for executing long phrases. Earlier,

[99] Grove "Rhetoric and Music."

more conservative styles of phrasing, like those exemplified by Quantz, favored shorter, more punctuated gestures. In Chapter 14 of *Versuch*, Quantz provides an example of an embellished Adagio with tremendous detail.[100] In sections 41-43 of this chapter, he breaks down the embellished melody note by note, demonstrating which notes are to be played "strong" and "weak," highlighting where to place crescendos and diminuendos, and specifying the strength of attack on certain notes.[101] Quantz warns his readers, however, that such detail is not to be taken to "extreme degree," but rather approached "as in painting, where so-called *mezze tinte* or half-tints, by which the dark is imperceptibly joined to the light, are employed to express light and shadow." "In singing and playing," he goes on to say, "you must use the diminuendo and crescendo like half-tints, since this variety is indispensable for good execution in music."[102]

This level of nuanced micro-phrasing was already beginning to fall out of favor during Quantz's lifetime. Leopold Mozart took particular issue with this approach. In his treatise, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule,* published just four years after Quantz's *Versuch*, he points out how overly detailed gestural phrasing can sound particularly un-vocal:

> [If] a singer who during every short phrase stopped, took a breath, and specially stressed first this note, then that note, would unfailingly move everyone to laughter. The human voice glides quite easily from one note to another; and a sensible singer will never make a break unless some special kind of expression, or the divisions or rests of the phrase demand one. And who is not aware that singing is at all times the aim of every instrumentalist; because one must approximate to nature as much as possible.[103]

This sentiment, though perhaps misrepresenting Quantz's intentions, shows a changing attitude toward the human voice as an instrument itself, rather than a means toward eloquent declamation. Not coincidentally, the shift from the dynamically nuanced gestures to *cantabile* phrasing corresponded with the dissolution of rhetoric and music.

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[100] Quantz, 169-72.
[101] Ibid., 176-8.
[102] Ibid., 172-3.
[103] Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* 108-109.

Virtuoso performing

Another important development in the music written for oboe and for the voice is marked by the rise in popularity of the virtuoso performer. Though many of the most successful musicians were employed by courts during this period, a gradual shift from patron-centered to audience-centered performing was underway. This newfound power of public audiences, as well as a more globally connected musical climate, helped launch Europe's top soloists to stardom. Parallel to this, the oboe itself began to undergo modifications to allow for an increased range and technical facility. According to Burgess and Haynes, there were numerous well-known virtuoso oboists during this period, especially associated with the Mannheim Hoftheater.[104] I will focus on the most famous virtuoso musician and composer of the Classical era, W. A. Mozart, and his relationship with the oboe, as well as one of the oboists employed in Mannheim, Ludwig August Lebrun.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mozart is the most well remembered virtuoso of the Classical era. His music for the oboe, especially his Oboe Concerto, K 314, is canonized with the highest reverence in the 21st century, despite the fact that its manuscript wasn't discovered until the 20th century.[105] The concerto, like all Mozart's wind concerti, seems operatic in conception; the solo parts demand instrumentalists to play like the greatest opera singers. In fact, Mozart's writing for the voice as well as the oboe, was shaped over the course of his career by his interactions with individual performers.

To expose young Wolfgang to the world outside of Salzburg, his father, Leopold Mozart, took a leave of absence from his job as Kapellmeister and brought Wolfgang and his sister, Nannerl, on a Grand Tour around western Europe between 1763-1766. These travels, which

[104] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 90.
[105] Ibid., 208.

included stops in Brussels, Paris, London, and the Hague, cemented Wolfgang's international reputation as a wunderkind. Young Wolfgang seemed to have learned a great deal from his exposure to musicians on this tour. These interactions included a meeting with the famous oboist Johann Christian Fischer in the Hague during the winter of 1765-66. As Nathan Broder suggests,

> "It is very likely… that his acquaintance with these musicians enlarged Wolfgang's knowledge of the nature and properties of their instruments. For we find in the symphony written at this time (in E flat, K. 22) a slightly more consistent use of the winds (particularly the oboes) as individual voices. In the Andante the oboes are skillfully and even expressively handled, carrying on the song, underlining it, or adding bits of color to it."[106]

Mozart utilized this understanding of the oboe's singing characteristics in one of his first operas, *La finta semplice,* K. 51., a remarkably characteristic *opera buffa* that premiered in Vienna when he was only thirteen.[107] The aria "Senti l'eco, ove t'aggiri" contains an oboe obbligato part.

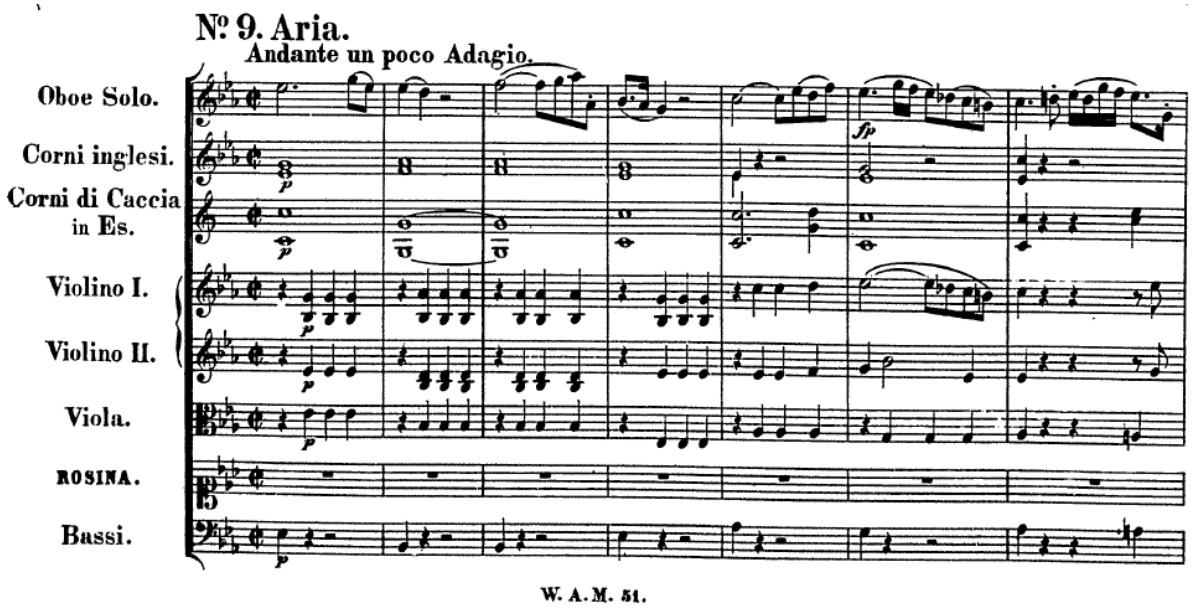

Figure 1.6 - "Senti l'eco, ove t'aggiri" mm. 1-7

[106] Nathan Broder, "The Wind-Instruments in Mozart's Symphonies," 242.
[107] Grove, "Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus."

The young Mozart's oboe obbligato writing displays a lighter, more carefree, Galant style than Bach's. In this cavatina aria, the prima donna, Rosina, is flirting and scheming to outwit two competitive brothers by making them both fall in love with her. The oboe part is not written in counterpoint with the voice, but rather in playful, flirtatious interjections. Still it is clear that Mozart "skillfully and expressively handled" the oboe writing, allowing it to "carry on the song" and "add bits of color."

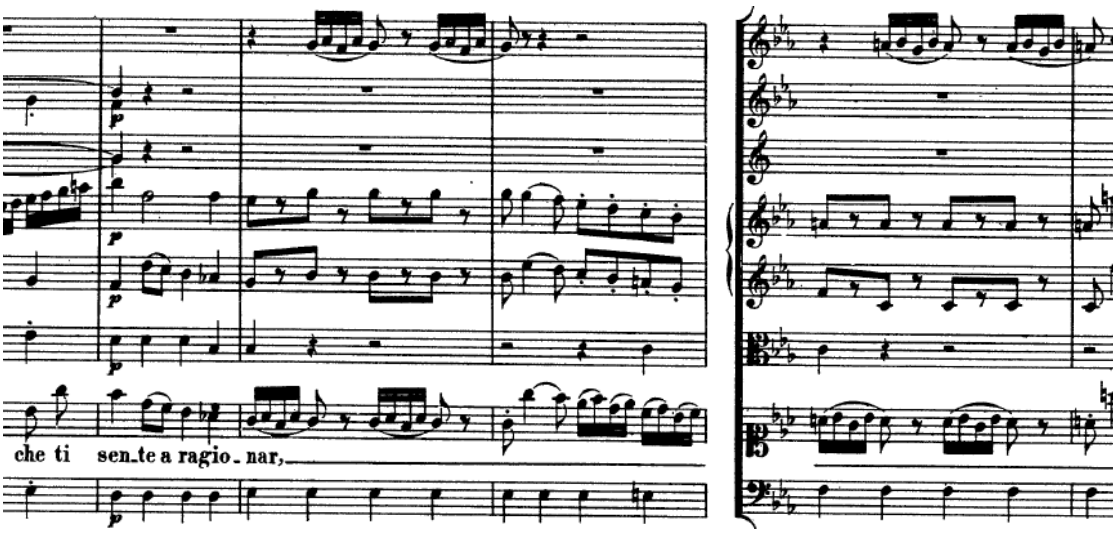

Figure 1.7 - "Senti l'eco, ove t'aggiri" mm. 68-73

As a more mature opera composer, Mozart continued to learn from his interactions with performers, especially singers. From his own notes and scores, it is clear that Mozart thoughtfully considered his singers when writing vocal works, taking care always to maintain a "work-in-progress" approach. Ian Woodfield highlights this aspect of Mozart's compositional process in his book chapter "Mozart's Compositional Methods: Writing for his Singers." Woodfield shows how throughout the compositional process, Mozart rehearsed with singers before finalizing important details of his arias, like key and range—particularly in dramatic, final cadences—to make sure they were comfortable and could show off to the fullest of their

capabilities. Speaking of a particular collaboration with the tenor, Anton Raaff, Mozart's first Idomeneo, he said "For I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes."[108]

The careful attention to detail Mozart maintained when composing for singers seems to apply to his work with instrumental musicians as well. While in Munich fulfilling his commission to write *Idomeneo,* Mozart crossed paths again with the oboist Friedrich Ramm, whom he had interacted with and heard perform in Mannheim some years earlier. Mozart's impressions of Ramm were quite favorable; in a letter to his father, he documented having heard Ramm perform his Oboe Concerto at least five times, referring to it as Ramm's *cheval de bataille.*[109] It was during this period in Munich that he finished his Oboe Quartet, KV 370, specifically for Ramm. While his Oboe Concerto, written in 1777 for the oboist Giuseppe Ferlendis, makes use of the oboe's vocal characteristics, the tessitura of the piece does not go higher than D6, the commonly accepted upper limit of the oboe of the time. However, when composing the Oboe Quartet four years later specifically with Friedrich Ramm's high register fluency in mind, he includes several E6s and F6s. Bruce Haynes points out that, while Mozart's oboe writing retains mostly similar tonalities to Bach's, his Oboe Quartet has a mean range almost six semitones higher than Bach's average for oboe obbligatos.[110]

August Lebrun and Francesca Danzi

To explore how the changing function of opera, as well as the exaltation of the virtuoso manifested in the writings for the oboe and voice toward the end of the 18th century, I will explore the careers of two prominent performers: oboist, Ludwig August Lebrun, and his wife, soprano Francesca Lebrun née Danzi.

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[108] Ian Woodfield, "Mozart's Compositional Methods: Writing for his Singers," 35-38.
[109] George T. Riordan, "The History of the Mozart Oboe Concerto K. 314: Based on Letters of the Mozart Family, a Review of Literature and Some Observations on the Work," 7.
[110] Bruce Haynes, "Mozart and the Oboe," 43-47.

Francesca Lebrun Danzi (1756-1791) was born Franziska Danzi into a musical family; her older brother was Franz Danzi, known for his woodwind quintets. Franziska was a highly sought-after coloratura soprano who premiered opera roles by Salieri, Holzbauer, and J. C. Bach. She was known to have an incredibly high range, capable of singing up to A6.[111] She was employed by the Mannheim Hoftheater, where she met her husband, Ludwig August Lebrun.

Ludwig August Lebrun (1752-1790) is best identified today by his six oboe concerti, but during his lifetime, he was known as a performer as well as a composer. His professional reputation was augmented through his collaborations with his wife. During the height of their career in the 1780's, they were the highest paid musicians in the Mannheim court, yet they spent the majority of their time traveling together and performing on the road. As an oboist, Lebrun was known for his incredible high range, up to E6 and F6, which was not commonly performed before his time. Perhaps Lebrun's close association with Friedrich Ramm inspired him to expand his upper register, but more likely it was his wife's coloratura range to match her high tessitura.[112]

Lebrun's surviving concerti for the oboe demonstrate this high range, as well as numerous works composed for the performing couple. In the opera *Günther von Schwarzburg* by Ignaz Holzbauer, the Act 1 aria, "Der Glänzende Himmel war finstere Wüste" features an oboe obbligato (written expressly for Lebrun) that shows the high F in the introduction before the singer enters. The soprano line soars up to F6 in florid coloratura lines throughout the aria, the oboe often supporting her in parallel thirds and sixths.

The text in Figure 1.8, "The sun shines more beautifully! It does not bow its head to terrible shadows," is supported by radiant, shrill music—the voice and oboe largely moving in

[111] Paul Corneilson, "Opera at Mannheim," 65-66.
[112] Burgess, "Critical Editions."

parallel motion in their highest tessitura. Holzbauer's writing, however, seems more likely composed for the Lebrun's virtuosity than as a vehicle to express specific passions.

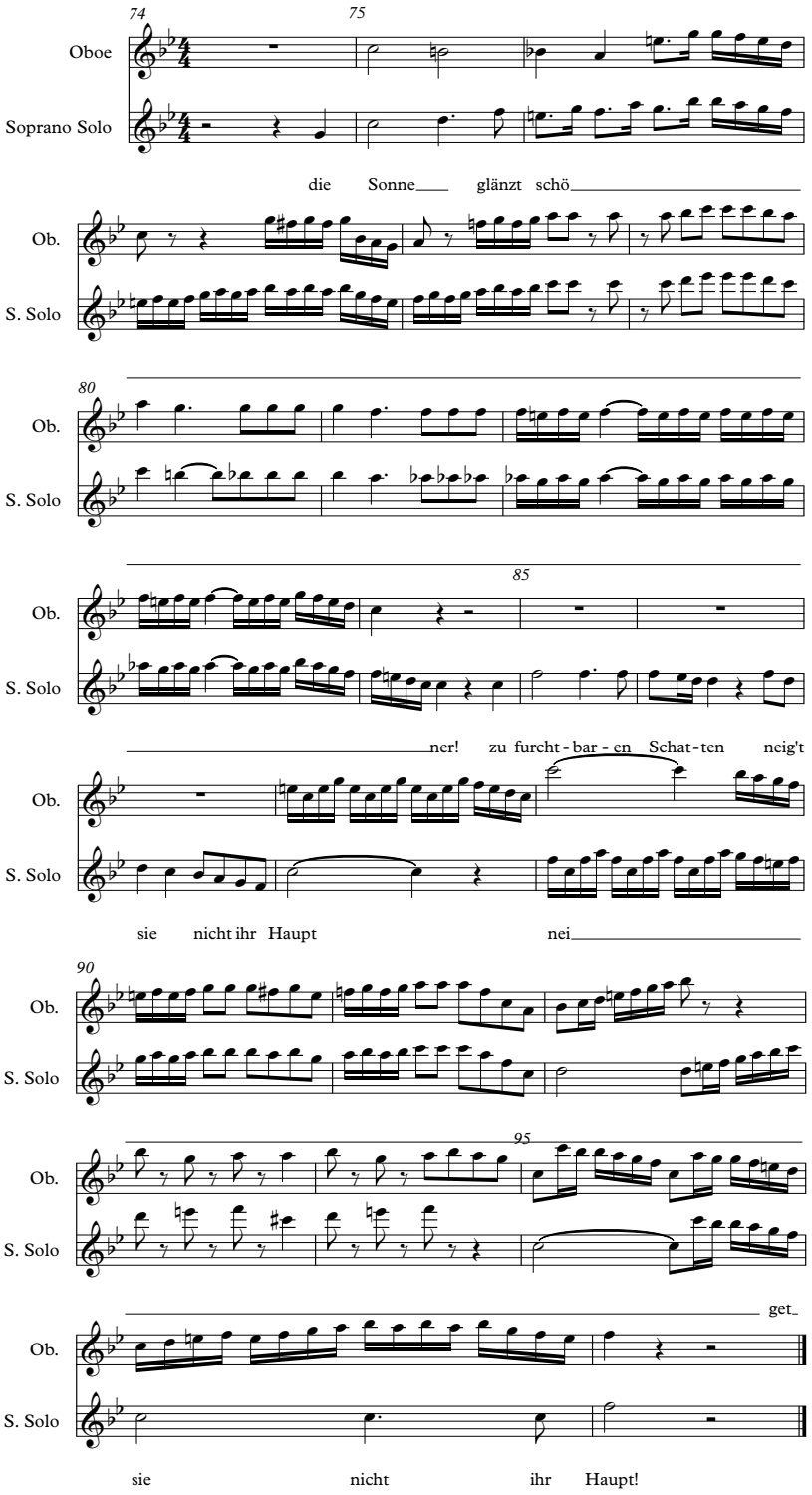

Figure 1.8 - "Der Glänzende Himmel was finstere Wüste" mm. 74-97

In the critical edition of Lebrun's music, Geoffrey Burgess notes that "the couple's playing and singing complemented each other perfectly and arias with obbligato oboe were written for them, as for instance those in *Günther von Schwarzburg* (1777) by Ignaz Holzbauer, L'Europa riconosciuta (1778) by Antonio Salieri and Castore e Polluce (1787) by Georg Joseph Vogler." Lebrun himself was purported to have written arias for soprano with oboe obbligato as well, but these are all now lost.[113]

"Quando più erato freme" from *L'Europa Riconosciuta*

To explore another obbligato aria specifically conceived for the Lebrun's, I will look at Antonio Salieri's *L'Europa Riconosciuta*. *L'Europa Riconosciuta* (Europe Revealed) was written for the opening of Teatro alla Scala in 1778. Christoph Gluck, one of the most famous composers in Europe at the time, was originally commissioned for this premiere, but unable to fit it into a busy schedule, he passed the opportunity along to his student, Salieri. Salieri, who collaborated with librettist Mattia Verazi, wrote the four leading roles—Europa, Semele, Isséo, and Egisto—with incredible virtuosic demands. These roles themselves are so challenging that the opera was not performed again after its premiere for over 200 hundred years. Riccardo Muti programmed a revised version for the reopening of the Milan theater in 2004 after a period of renovations to the hall.

In the 2004 performance, Désirée Rancatore sang the role of Semele, which was originally written for Francesca Danzi Lebrun. The showpiece aria for this brilliant coloratura role, "Quando più erato freme," features a virtuosic oboe obbligato. In fact, the prominence of oboe solos throughout the opera suggest the Salieri was composing specifically for Lebrun, who would have been present for the premiere with his wife. The oboe part is so prominent,

[113] Burgess, "Critical Editions."

especially in the long introduction, that it sounds more like an oboe concerto than an aria, according to John A. Rice. When the soprano enters, "the oboe concerto then becomes a double concerto for soprano and oboe."[114]

"Quando più erato freme" comes toward the end of the opera, as Semele celebrates a sudden turn of good fortune when Isseo, her beloved, slays Egisto, the man she was supposed to marry.[115] Semele compares her struggles to a storm at sea ("When the sea roars more angrily, when it threatens deadly destruction, a ray of friendly hope may shine again amid the tempests.") Here Salieri uses the solo oboe to express the hope embodied in the emerging sunshine. "The oboe is silent as she depicts the tempest with a declamatory melody full of awkward leaps. But when she sings of the ray of hope that can shine even in the darkest storm, she does so with a lyrical, conjunct tune. The oboe joins her as a symbol of hope, playing in thirds and sixths; Semele is no longer alone."[116] Salieri included an opportunity for a duo cadenza for the oboe and soprano at the end, likely offering the Lebruns a moment to shine together.

A review written by Charles Burney in 1778 suggests that the couple performed this aria on tour in London.

> In the summer of 1778 she went into Italy and sang at Milan with Pacchierotti, Rubinelli, and the Balducci; and during this journey it was imagined that she would have improved her style of singing; but travelling with her husband, an excellent performer on the hautbois, she seems to have listened to nothing else; and at her return to London she copied the tone of his instrument so exactly, that when he accompanied her in divisions of thirds and sixths, it was impossible to discover who was uppermost.[117]

Burney's opinion of Franziska Lebrun's singing highlights her close collaboration with her husband and how this may have been detrimental to her image as a singer. Unfortunately, during the peak of their touring fame, Ludwig August Lebrun died of inflammation of the liver in Berlin

[114] John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, 264.
[115] Grove, "L'Europa Riconosciuta."
[116] Rice, 264.
[117] Burney, *A General History of Music,* 2:886.

in 1790. Franziska died just five months later, coincidentally placing her birth and death in the same years as Mozart's.

19th Century

Further decline of rhetoric

By the turn of the 19th century, all writings connecting rhetoric and music were considered to be antiquated. A dramatic cultural shift, like that of the Humanism movement which first revived the study of classical rhetoric more than two centuries prior, was underway. Artists, musicians, philosophers, and politicians in the Romantic revolution sought to invert and replace these Humanist doctrines that looked back to antiquity. The success of that break with tradition explains why our modern understanding of classical rhetoric and its significance and influence is so limited. Rhetoric was no longer the cornerstone of expression across all arts but was seen as a hindrance to free expression of the individual. This sentiment was supported by major composers of the era. In 1843, Robert Schumann ridiculed the notion that "a composer working with an idea sits down like a preacher on Saturday afternoon, schematizes his theme according to the usual three points, and works it out in the accepted way."[118]

This cultural shift toward art inspired by an individual's unique personal experiences led society to view composers as creative geniuses. This reverence toward the power of the composer as a prophet began to divide the equitable roles of composer and performer. Performers were left to recreate the work of the genius as meticulously as possible and no longer were tasked with improvisation and creative ornamentation. "The Romantic sensibility can be defined—in contrast to its predecessor—by the emphasis on individual expression and

[118] Grove, "Rhetoric and Music."

introspection, self-contained works of art ('absolute music') and the view of beauty as a unique artistic standard separate from the expression of a specific passion."[119]

Performers, too, enjoyed an elevated position in society. The transition away from court-supported to publicly funded performing also deepened the divide between performers and audiences. In a society of patronage-sponsored music, composers and performers were expected to conform to social conventions and established norms of expression, or risk alienating their patrons and therefore losing their work. Now, with broadening public audiences, and the increasing focus on fostering personal artistic sensibilities, performers no longer held audience's tastes and opinions in high regard. The universal passions understood by educated Renaissance and Baroque patronage no longer connected performers and audiences in collaborative effort. Nicholas Harnoncourt, as quoted by Geoffrey Burgess, puts it succinctly. "I like to say that music prior to 1800 *speaks*, [while] subsequent music *paints*." Rhetorical music is a specific message to be understood, while Romantic music is a mood to be felt.[120]

In terms of the oboe, the 19th century is defined by developments to the physical instrument, reed making, and pedagogy more than by developments in repertoire. The implementation of keys to the oboe, both in number and arrangement, varied widely across Europe at the onset of the 19th century, but ultimately arrived at its standardized form in the 1880's.[121] Detailed instruction on reed making began to appear in the 19th century method books from Garnier, Barret, Fahrbach, Salviani, and Cappelli. New technological developments in reed making tools like Henri Brod's gouging machine provided greater consistency than gouging and shaping by hand.[122] Progress in reed making, perhaps even more than the addition of keys to the

[119] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician*, 66.
[120] Ibid., 76.
[121] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe,* 125.
[122] Ibid., 157-161.

oboe, allow for a greater level of technical proficiency, as evidenced by the solo music of the 19th century.

The dissociation of music and rhetoric, as well as the fostering of the performer as reinterpreter, were perpetuated most of all by the shifting pedagogical approach to conservatory training. As Burgess and Haynes explain, "The conservatory trained musician was closer to functionary than artist: more a faithful reproducer of a composer's text than a creative interpreter. The type of pedagogical material used by these institutions illustrates this point. Given in large part to exercises rather than explanatory texts, nineteenth-century instrumental treatises are, above all, technical manuals organized systematically and progressively, and are less concerned with providing guidance on matters of interpretation than the treatises of the previous century."[123]

Instrumentation

Theories of instrumentation were elevated with the development and expansion of the symphony orchestra, a defining feature of 19th century instrumental music. However, the art of instrumentation had roots in the era of rhetoric—instrumental color was itself a part of the Doctrine of Affections (*Affektenlehre*), albeit translated in terms of human emotions rather than as orchestral colors. The trumpet evoked militaristic and war imagery to 18th century audiences. The horn was generally associated with hunting or with royalty. Woodwinds were better suited to mirror scenes of love, sorrow, and death. The oboe family, particularly the oboe d'amore and taille, were especially well suited toward these affects in Bach's mind. Bach saw the oboe as a versatile and flexible instrument, capable of expressing a variety of affects.[124]

[123] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 132.
[124] Ibid., 72-74.

As orchestras grew and composers explored greater combinations of instruments, theories of instrumentation took on new meaning in the Romantic era. Descriptions of individual instruments of the orchestra explored deeper connotations associated with their timbre. The oboe was seen as embodying a wide range of characteristics: particularly those of the pastoral, nostalgic, joyful, exotic, and melancholy. From my 21st century perspective, I might argue that it is the oboe's parallel to the human voice that allows it such a range of poignant expression.

Perhaps the most significant writing on instrumentation from the 19th century was Hector Berlioz's *Orchestration Treatise*, first published in 1844. His writings on the oboe seem to reflect the way it was perceived by composers, performers, and audiences.

> [The oboe's] special characteristics convey candour, naïve grace, sentimental delight, or the suffering of weaker creatures. It expresses this marvelously well in cantabile. It has the capacity to express agitation to a certain degree, but one should be careful not to stretch it as far as cries of passion or the splutter of rage or threats or heroics, since its little bittersweet voice becomes quite ineffective and absurd.[125]

Notably, his phrase "the suffering of weaker creatures" highlights a popular connection between the oboe and the 19th century woman.

The Female Oboe

According to Burgess and Haynes, "The oboe resembled the highly stigmatized nineteenth-century image of womankind as being always on the verge of hysteria." These comparisons may have been drawn from the oboe's reputation, one still held today, as "temperamental." Such temperamentality was seen as needing to be "brought under subjugation by the performer who, until the 20th century, was, without exception, male." Additionally, the oboe was not cast in the role of virtuoso, not only because of its technical challenges, but also

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[125] Heitor Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary,* trans. by Hugh Macdonald, 104.

because of the notion that it was thought "improper for a 'feminine' instrument to engage in virtuosity, which was viewed as a predominantly masculine form of exhibitionism."[126]

Rachel Becker further extends this metaphor to the physicality of oboe playing—more akin to holding one's breath than running out of air—to a woman wearing a corset.

> Because of the tiny aperture created by the double reed, the oboist, far from running out of air, is rather perpetually on the verge of having too much air. Exhales as well as inhales must be planned, and stress can easily leave a performer hyperventilating from a build-up of air and a lack of oxygen. A comparison with the corseted body of the nineteenth-century woman seems melodramatic but apt.[127]

These sexist comparisons between the hysterical woman and the oboe were especially perpetuated in opera. "With few exceptions, the characters [in opera] who mourn their loss are women. In these contexts, the oboe or cor anglais provides symbolic poignancy by acting as an instrumental corollary to the women's voices, representing the essence of the expression of their loss; it stands for desire that gains its psychic force from being configured as lost, absent, dead or otherwise irretrievable." [128] I will next examine two examples of oboe obbligato writing in 19th century opera that support these associations: the feminine, pastoral, nostalgic, joyful, and heartbreaking oboe in 19th century opera.

Opera

Fidelio Ludwig van Beethoven

Fidelio, Beethoven's only complete opera, comes out of what scholars refer to as his "Heroic" middle period, which is more closely inspired by his mentors of the Classical period, Haydn and Mozart, than his late period. Beethoven first premiered *Fidelio* in 1805, then made a

[126] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 233-34.
[127] Rachel Becker, "Pasculli and His Oboe: Feminine Characterization in Opera Fantasias," 140.
[128] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 233.

series of revisions and premiered the version best known to us today in 1814. One of his late additions to this opera was the Act 2 aria, “Und spür’ ich nicht linde.”[129]

Und spür' ich nicht linde,	And don’t I sense a gentle,
Sanft säuselnde Luft?	soft-whispering air
Und ist nicht mein Grab mir erhellet?	And isn’t my grave lit up?
Ich seh', wie ein Engel im rosigen Duft	I see, like, an angel in a rosy haze
Sich tröstend zur Seite mir stellet,	who stands comfortingly by my side,
Ein Engel, Leonoren, der Gattin, so gleich,	An angel Leonore! Leonore so like my wife,
Der führt mich zur Freiheit ins himmlische Reich.	who’ll lead me to freedom in the heavenly kingdom![130]

The libretto, with some spoken dialogue, tells how Leonore, disguised as a prison guard named "Fidelio," rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison. Florestan begins a two-part aria from his dark cell, lamenting the loss of his happiness as the price of having spoken the truth (‘In des Lebens Frühlingstagen’). As he accepts his fate, “mein Pflicht, habe ich getan!” (“I’ve done my duty!”) a vision comes to him of rescue by Leonore (“Und spür’ ich nicht linde, sanft säuselnde Luft?”). As the apparition of Leonore appears, the oboe rises out of the texture of driving offbeat octaves in the strings, ascending to a joyous high C before falling into counterpoint with Florestan’s joyful arpeggiated melody, “And don’t I sense a gentle, soft whispering air?”

[129] Grove, “Fidelio.”
[130] http://www.aria-database.com/translations/fidelio11_gott.txt.

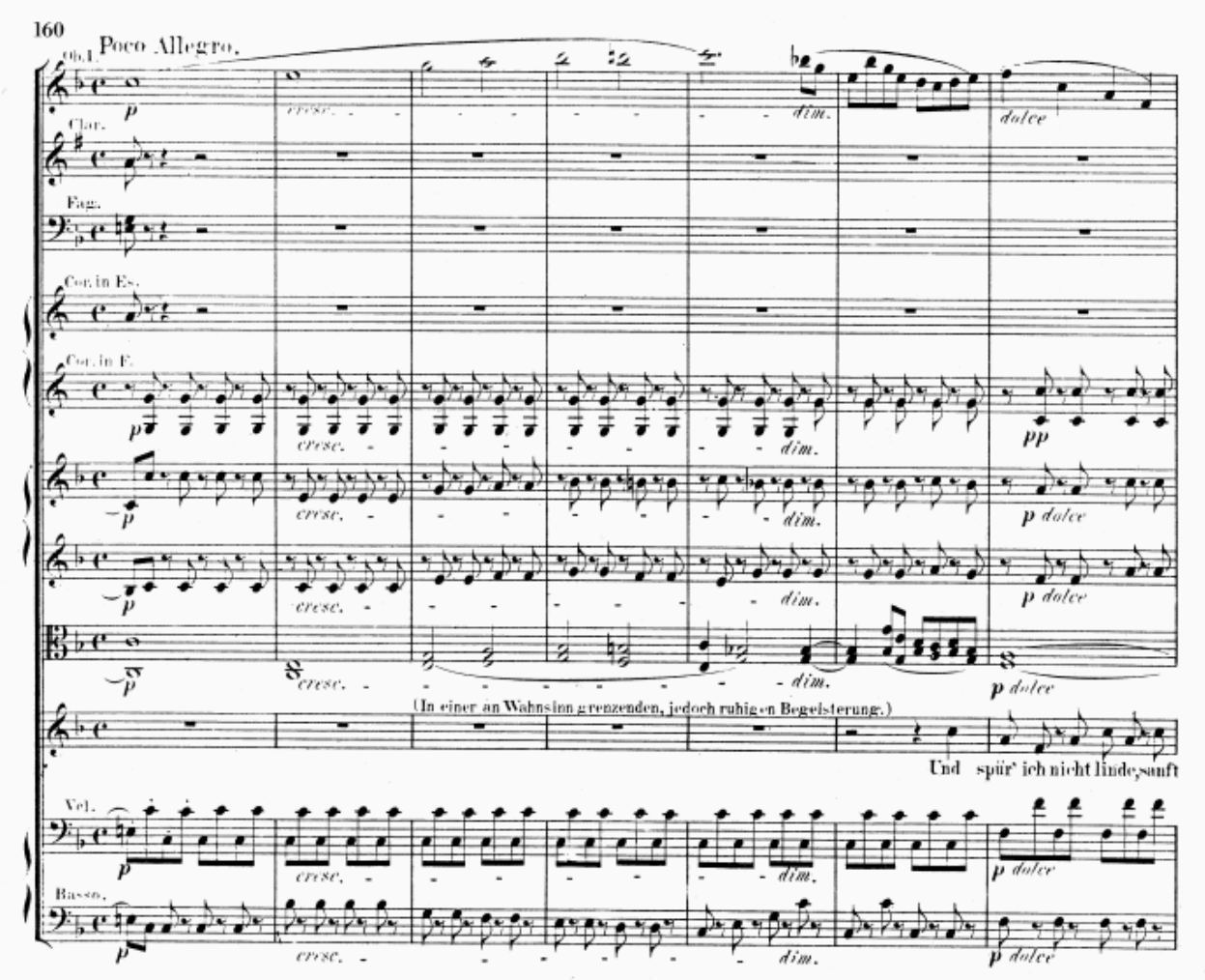

Figure 1.9 - "Und spur' ich nicht linde" mm. 1-7

The oboe signals a switch in Florestan's demeanor from despair to hope as his dream foreshadows his eventual rescue by Leonore, embodied by the joyful oboe sound. The oboe remains in playful counterpoint in the brilliant key of F major throughout the rest of aria, reaching its climactic point on the word "Freiheit" (freedom) with three, articulated F6s. "Here, as much as a signal of loss, the oboe brings the promise of hope as the tears shed by the lamenting instrument become the redeeming tears of a self-sacrificing woman. The small voice of the oboe in the midst of torments not only was symbolic of loss, but was also the thread on

which men could depend for salvation: in this case, Leonora rescues Florestan"[131] This important turning point for Florestan is underscored by the "joyful oboe sound" that Beethoven loved.[132]

Aida Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppi Verdi's *Aida* also utilizes the oboe timbre as an expression of femininity, though from a different perspective. Solo oboe appears extensively throughout the opera, especially as an allusion to the exotic. In the late 1860's when Verdi was composing *Aida*, which is set in ancient Egypt, he drew inspiration from pipes that had been depicted in recently unearthed cave paintings. The aulos and tibia, double-piped instruments of the ancient world, were commonly alluded to by Romantic composers, who used the oboe to represent antiquity.[133]

One of the oboe's greatest solos in operatic literature comes in the Act 3 aria, "O Patria Mia," as the titular character sings longingly about her home country, to which she knows she will never return.

"O Patria Mia"

O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!	Oh my homeland, I will never see you again!
Mai più! mai più ti rivedrò!	No more! never see you again!
O cieli azzurri o dolci aure native	Oh blue skies and gentle breezes of my village
Dove sereno il mio mattin brillò	Where the calm morning shone
O verdi colli o profumate rive	Oh green hills and perfumed shores
O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!	Oh my homeland, I will never see you again!
Mai più! no, no, mai più, mai più!	No more! no, no, never again, never again!
O fresche valli, o queto asil beato	Oh cool valleys, and blessed refuge
Che un di promesso dall'amor mi fu	What a promise to me by my love
Or che d'amore il sogno è dileguato	Now that the dream of love has vanished
O patria mia, non ti vedrò mai più.	Oh my homeland, I will not see you again.
O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!	Oh my homeland, I will never see you again![134]

[131] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 227.
[132] Berlioz, 106.
[133] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe,* 11-13.
[134] https://www.liveabout.com/o-patria-mia-lyrics-and-text-translation-724023.

Aida, an Ethiopian princess, is imprisoned in Egypt, where she has fallen in love with Radames, captain of the guards and the heir-apparent to the Egyptian throne. As war rages between the two countries, she faces a difficult decision. She can gather information from Radames outlining Egypt's plan of attack and deliver it to her father, Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, or choose to protect Radames by keeping his secrets of battle. She knows by betraying Radames, he will face certain demise, but by betraying her father, he and she will both likely end up dead. In either circumstance, she is unlikely to ever see her beloved homeland again.[135]

Similar to Beethoven's late addition of "Und spür' ich nicht linde," "O Patria Mia" was also a late addition by Verdi, yet it remains one of 19th century opera's most famous arias. The oboe motif is first heard as the recitative transitions into the aria, wrapping twisting lines around Aida as she sings "O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!" ("Oh my homeland, I will never see you again!") The simple oboe melody evokes a *pianto,* or crying gesture, with the falling motion from F5 to E5, with an embellishing trill on the non-chord tone expressing nostalgia and longing. The descending chromatic motion at the end of the phrase, from A6 to F6, seemingly breaks out of the diatonic melody momentarily to evoke the princess's exoticism. The oboe maintains its usual association with the pastoral as Aida sings of "blue skies and gentle breezes" and "cool valleys and blessed refuge."

[135] Grove, "Aida."

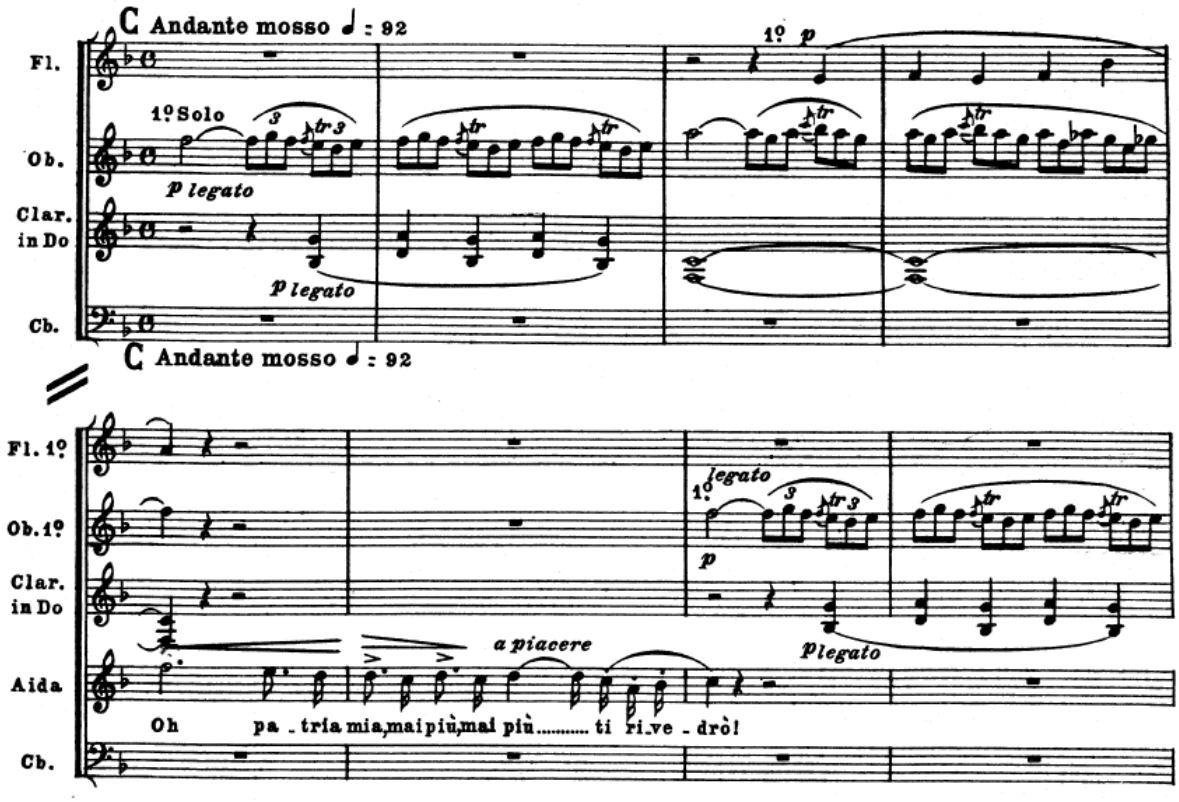

Figure 1.10 - "O Patria Mia" rehearsal C

This aria carries even greater poignancy in the context of the larger opera. Though given a chance to escape, Aida conceals herself in the subterranean vault where Radames is sentenced to be buried alive for treason. There the couple are able to be together in death and her prophetic ode to her homeland turns out to be true.

The Operatic Oboe in Solo Music

The close association of the oboe to 19th century opera was perpetuated in solo writing for the instrument as well. In fact, the majority of solo oboe music written in the 19th century still known to us today was written by oboist-composers, many of whom had direct ties to opera through their professional employment.

For reasons previously discussed, the 19th century oboist did not embody the virtuosic spirit of "masculine exhibitionism." Indeed, there were few prominent oboe soloists in the 19th

century. Most professional oboists of the time were employed by orchestras, either stand-alone ensembles or in opera orchestras. Most of the solo music written by the oboist-composers is inspired by opera and falls into two categories: contest music for Paris Conservatoire and opera fantasies.[136] It seems that the oboe's position as a solo instrument, as it had been developing for nearly two centuries, was still very much connected to the vocal practices and styles of the time.

French *Solos de Concert*

The largest body of solo oboe music from the 19th century is directly tied to the Paris Conservatoire and the tradition of the *Prix de Concours.* Since its founding in 1795, the Conservatoire National Superieur de Musique et de Danse, has held annual competitions for its students. The *Premier Prix* is awarded to the winning student, which results in an automatic graduation no matter how long he or she has been studying. In the 19th century, it was customary in the conservatoire's oboe studio for the competition pieces to be composed by the professor. Such famous oboe professors as Gustave Vogt, Stanislas Verroust, and Charles Colin, contributed to this large body of work, which represents some of the best solo and chamber music for oboe of the century.[137]

Many of the Conservatoire oboe professors played with the orchestra at the Académie Royale de Musique, also known simply as the Paris Opéra (founded by Lully in the 17th century and still around today, having outlived the monarchy it was first created to serve). This direct exposure to the trends of 19th century French opera certainly held influence on the way these oboists composed their *solos de concours*, exploring the operatic use of the oboe, especially in the French Grand Opera tradition.

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[136] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 129.
[137] Lindsey Anna Bird Reynolds, "The Influence of Nineteenth-Century French Opera on the Oboe *Solos de Concert* of Louis-Stanislas-Xavier Verroust," 1-3.

The most prolific 19th century composer of oboe music, Gustave Vogt, taught at the Conservatoire from 1816-53 and is credited with the founding of the modern French school of oboe playing. His professional engagements included a forty-year career in the Paris Opéra orchestra, where he was stationed in 1823 when a young Gioachino Rossini was in residency there. Rossini was so impressed with the oboe section, particularly with Vogt's English horn playing, that he decided to write the famous *Guillaume Tell* overture solo for him.[138]

Vogt's *Premier Solo de Concert* exemplifies his operatic influence. Composed and first used as a competition piece in 1840, this solo is part of a series of six concertos arranged for oboe and piano which was brought to publication between the years 1876 and 1890.[139] The solo oboe line closely resembles a soprano aria in numerous ways.

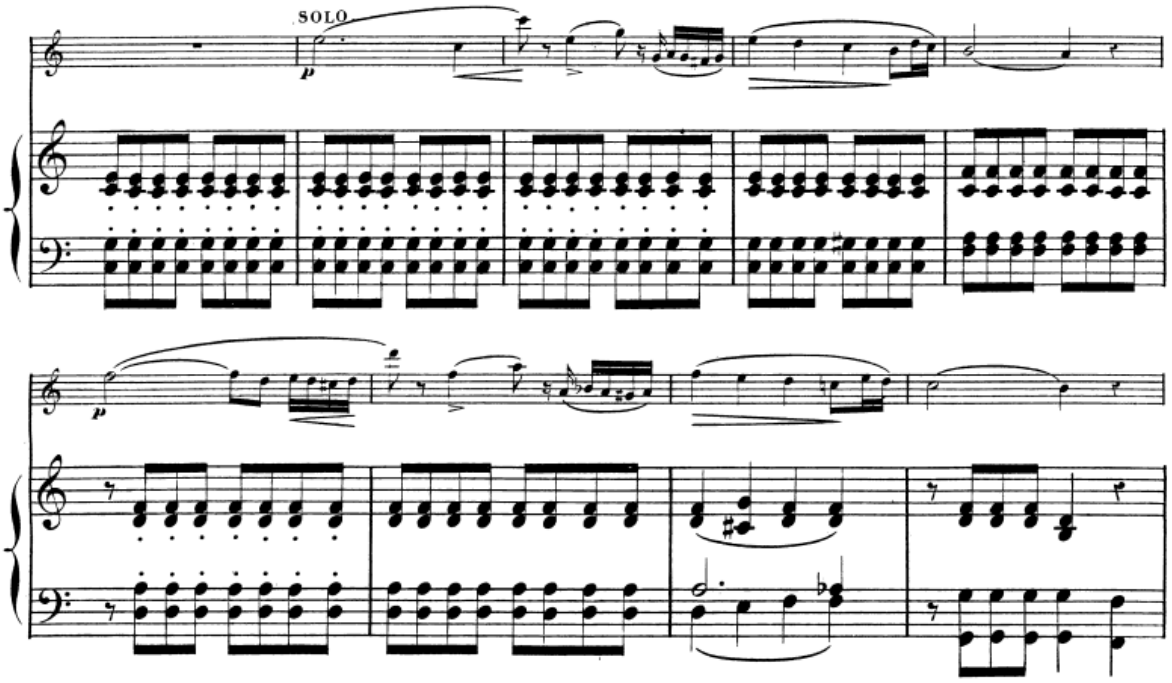

Figure 1.11 - *Premier Solo de Concert* mm. 8-16

[138] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 133.
[139] Charles-David Lehrer, "The nineteenth-century Parisian concerto," 242-244.

The oboe's opening theme is a vocal, cantabile melody over a dry, repeated ostinato in the piano. Vogt writes out the turns as part of the melodic material, which should be executed with ease as a good singer would. He chooses the key of C major, observing the limits in showmanship oboists might face in keys with more than two flats or sharps. By writing in an easier key, the performer can take all the liberties and play with the flourishes a soprano would use. At the cadence ending the exposition, Vogt writes *a piacere* and uses turns, wide leaps, and a fermata on the highest note—all characteristics of an operatic vocal melody.

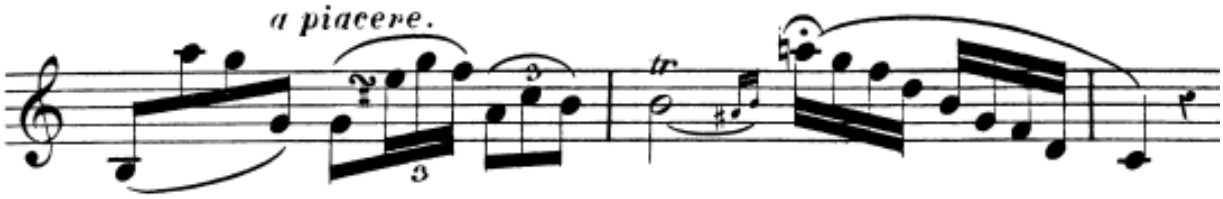

Figure 1.12 - *Prémiere Solo de Concert* oboe part mm. 45-47

This work by Vogt, as well as the extant works of the *solos de concours* tradition, are great pieces for students to learn a cantabile style of oboe playing.

Italian Opera Fantasies

A similar connection between operatic traditions and solo oboe writing also took place in Italy during the 19th century. Here, two of the best-known virtuoso players, Baldassare Centroni and Antonino Pasculli, contributed solo oboe works to another defining genre of the century, the opera fantasy piece. In contrast to the French *solos de concert,* the Italian opera fantasies of the 19th century, particularly those of Pasculli, are notoriously difficult to play. Still, despite exploring the idiomatic virtuosic capabilities of the instrument, these pieces are rooted deeply in the Italian opera tradition.

19th century Italian opera is defined by the *bel canto* tradition of singing. This style of singing treated the voice more like an instrument than a tool for communication. Text and language became less important, as the primary goal was to show off the singer's beautiful tone and technical ability. A recent interview in the *Double Reed* between the American oboist, Andrea Jayne Ridilla, and Italian oboist, Sandro Caldini, shows that Italian vocal traditions of 19th century opera have influenced the Italian traditions of oboe playing as well.

> Andrea Jayne Ridilla: What about the Bel Canto era of lyrical opera has this movement influenced oboe playing in Italy?
>
> Sandro Caldini: In general, during the 19th and first part of the 20th century, the concept of sound and the direction of the Italian school [of oboe playing] were influenced by the so-called *Bel Canto* era…because opera is the strongest component in our musical heritage in Italy. The Bel Canto style stretched the limits of the breath in order to execute long lines and hear pure voice. Words were not always needed because composers tried to highlight the voice as a musical instrument. We remember the legendary composers from our past – Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, masters of Bel Canto, as well as Verdi and Puccini into the 20th century – so as to understand the milieu in which so many famous Italian oboists received their formation.[140]

To explore how the bel canto tradition influenced opera fantasy pieces for solo oboe, I will look at the music of Antonino Pasculli. Pasculli adopted the genre of the fantasy piece, popularized by Liszt in his concertizing throughout Europe, setting some of Italian opera's greatest hits as flashy, virtuosic oboe solos, earning him the nickname, "Paganini of the Oboe" and the reputation as one of the greatest oboe virtuosos of all time. Ten of Pasculli's opera fantasy pieces for oboe (or English horn), based on popular *bel canto* operas, survive today: music he likely wrote for himself to perform throughout his illustrious touring and teaching career.

Notably, Pasculli's approach to writing fantasy pieces is based on specific operas, which differs from that of Gustave Vogt, and other 19th century French oboist-composers, whose solo

[140] Ridilla, "An Indissoluble Marriage: Italian Oboe Playing and the Human Voice. An Interview with Sandro Caldini," 87.

oboe writing was more loosely inspired by their exposure to French Grand Opera. In his dissertation, "Use Your Words: A Lyrical Guide to the Opera-Inspired Paraphrases of Antonino Pasculli (1842-1924) For Oboe and English Horn," Aaron Hill analyzes the text and plot material in the operas that inspired each of Pasculli's fantasy pieces. From these analyses, Hill outlines two compositional approaches in Pasculli's adaptations: the transcription and the paraphrase: "A transcription would typically be loyal to the original as possible, whereas a paraphrase would take more liberties with the material in a fantasy style."[141]

Using Hill's example of Pasculli's *Fantasia sull'opera 'Poliuto' di Donizetti* to represent the literal transcription approach, we can see how traditions in 19th century operatic solo music for the oboe differs between Italian and French composers. In Act 1, Scene 1 of Donizetti's opera, the title character is wrestling with his suspicions that his wife, Paolina, is in love with his enemy, Severo. Poliuto, a recent convert to Christianity, is singing a solemn prayer ("D'un'alma troppo fervida") that his paranoia is not rooted in truth.

D'un'alma troppo fervida	Temper the affections,
tempra buon Dio gli affetti…	God, of a soul too fervent…
tu che lo puoi,	You who can do it,
Nel combattuto core	Dispel my horrible suspicions
discenda il tuo favore,	In my warring heart, elate me with favor,
né più lo scuota un palpito	Nor let a single beat stir it
che indegno sia di te.	That is unworthy of you.[142]

Pasculli changes very little in his transcription of the original aria—he only raises the key by a half step to D major, and notes the tempo as *Adagio* instead of *Larghetto.*[143] The fact that

[141] Aaron Hill, Use Your Words: A Lyrical Guide to the Opera-Inspired Paraphrases of Antonino Pasculli (1842-1924) For Oboe and English Horn," 7.
[142] Ibid., 20.
[143] Ibid., 19-20.

Pasculli ornamented this aria far less than he often did in other works likely means that he felt the meaning of the text was important to the performance of the fantasy piece.

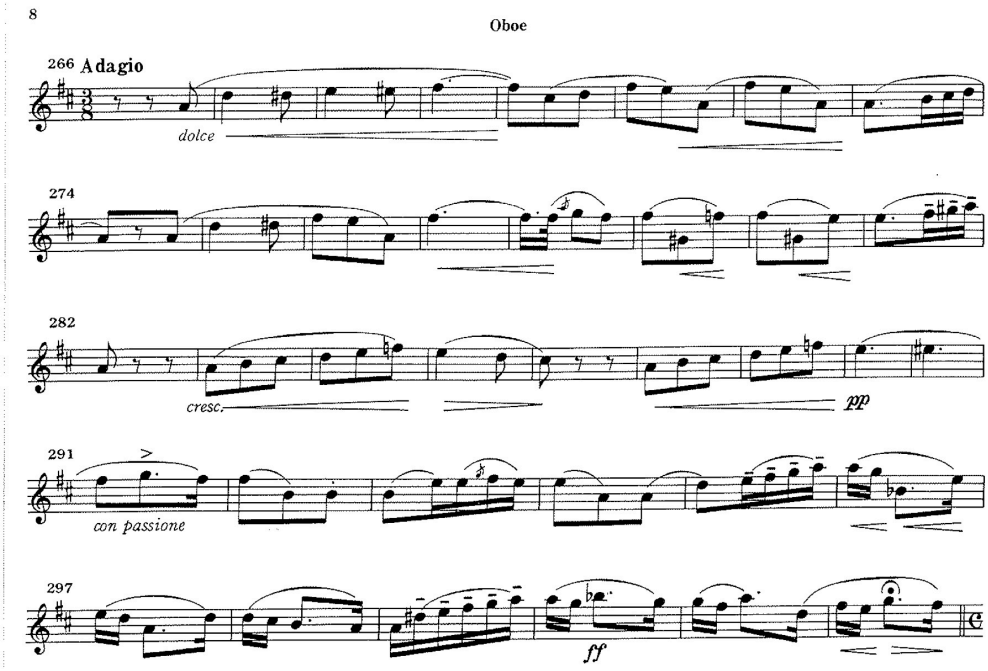

Figure 1.13 - *Fantasia sull'opera 'Poluito' di Donizetti* oboe part mm. 266-302

Understanding the stylistic conventions of 19th century French and Italian opera traditions can come in handy to a modern performer of opera-inspired oboe music. Yet, in the case of a literal aria transcription like Pasculli used in *Fantasia sull'opera 'Poliuto' di Donizetti,* an understanding of the aria text and context within the drama will certainly inform the performer's approach. This simple, unadorned major melody might seem like a resting place for the oboist, who by this point in the fantasy piece has survived 7 pages of incredibly virtuosic music, some of which are filled entirely with sixty-fourth notes. However, knowing the context in which Poliuto sings this melody—with a solemn plea to his new God—asks that the performer consider ways to highlight the prayerful and earnest nature of this *bel canto* aria.

Bridging Romanticism and Modernism

Romantic art and music were concerned so much with the exaltation of the beautiful that they often failed to capture the full range of human emotions and experiences. In Romantic music, the blossoming trend toward "absolute music" removed the functional component of expressing specific passions that drove Baroque performance practice. As the 19th century came to a close, composers associated with the Modernist movement began experimenting with "form, tonality, and orchestration in a manner evocative of the radical qualities of contemporary culture and society. In instrumental music the modern was associated with the tone poem and large-scale work evocative of ideas and emotions using massive forces and novel instrumental effects."[144]

Gustav Mahler was one of the most important composers on the edge of 20th century Modernism. His "distortions of symphonic form, penchant for fragmentation and unconventional sonorities and use of instruments, including cowbells and hammers" ultimately paved the way for the more radically modern composers of the Second Viennese school—Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern.[145]

***Kindertotenlieder* Gustav Mahler**

Mahler composed almost exclusively in song and symphonic forms throughout his career. His music leans into heavy subject matter and poignantly expresses human suffering. *Kindertotenlieder,* a symphonic song cycle composed between 1901-1904, is an excellent example. Mahler set five poems from Friedrich Rückert's collection of the same title, written in 1834 after the untimely death of two of the poet's children from scarlet fever, and published posthumously in 1872. These poems express multiple stages of grief: anguish, denial, and acceptance. Mahler himself understood the sorrow and grieving process associated with losing

[144] Grove, "Modernism."
[145] Ibid.

children. As a young boy, he lost eight of his siblings, and after completing this cycle, lost one of his daughters to scarlet fever.[146]

This song cycle exemplifies Mahler's expressive use of the oboe. Mahler liked to explore the extremes of register and dynamics in his symphonic oboe writing—composing unison low B-flats for the whole oboe section at *fff,* or writing special instructions for playing with the bell of the instrument in the air ("Schalltrichtere in die Höhe")—but his use of the oboe is more poignant in the *Kindertotenlieder.* Particularly in the first song of the set "Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n," Mahler utilizes the oboe as a symbolic representation of sorrow beyond words. Burgess and Haynes touch on this aspect of Mahler's writing for the instrument. "While the oboe's clean articulation emulates a singer's voice, it can never replace language. But the oboe's very inability to convey linguistic meaning is what also allows it to transcend words and communicate more directly through emotion."[147]

"Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n!"

Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehn,	Now the sun prepares to rise as brightly
Als sei kein Unglück die Nacht geschehn!	As if no misfortune had befallen in the night!
Das Unglück geschah nur mir allein!	The misfortune befell me alone!
Die Sonne, sie scheinet allgemein!	The sun, it shines on all mankind!
Du mußt nicht die Nacht in dir verschränken,	You must not enclose the night within you
Mußt sie ins ew'ge Licht versenken!	You must immerse it in eternal light.
Ein Lämplein verlosch in meinem Zelt!	A little lamp went out in my firmament,
Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt!	Hail to the joyful light of the world![148]

Though this piece is scored for a large, late-Romantic orchestra, the first movement is more akin to a chamber music setting. The solo oboe and horn feature most prominently above sparse accompaniment by strings and harp. The movement begins with an oboe solo marked

[146] Grove, "Mahler, Gustav."
[147] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 234.
[148] https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1930.

klagend, which sets an anguished, lamenting tone amidst the thin orchestration. The solo oboe and solo vocal lines dovetail into one another throughout the first four lines of the poem, sometimes creating one continuous melodic line. This voice crossing highlights the pain of the text as it dissolves into the realm of the unspeakable. The speaker alludes to a horrible suffering but does not articulate it directly. "Now the sun wants to rise as brightly, as if nothing terrible had happened during the night."

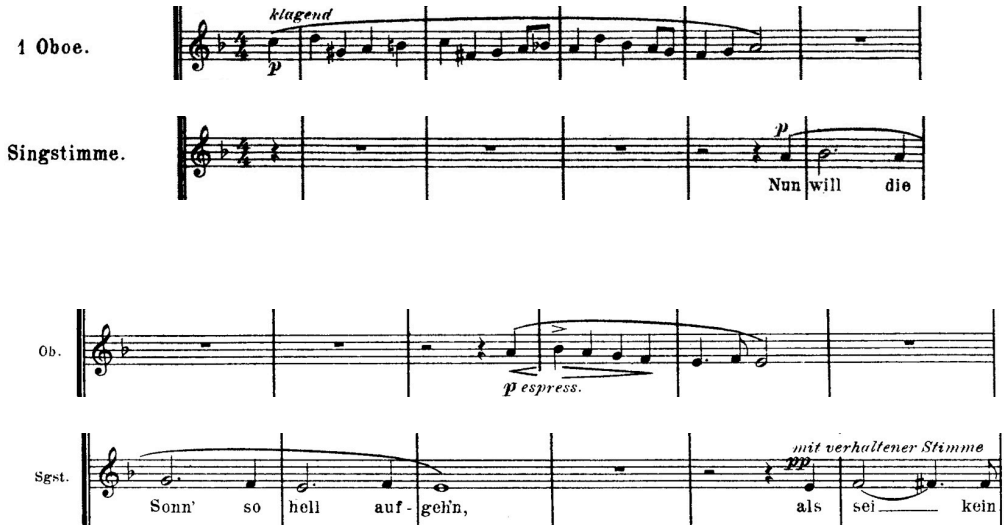

Figure 1.14 - "Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n" mm. 1-12

As the tone of the fifth line changes from despair to consolation, the oboe and voice appear in counterpoint on the line "Du mußt nicht die Nacht in dir verschränken." The contrary motion between the two parts might suggest that Rückert's words of comfort oppose his internal feelings.

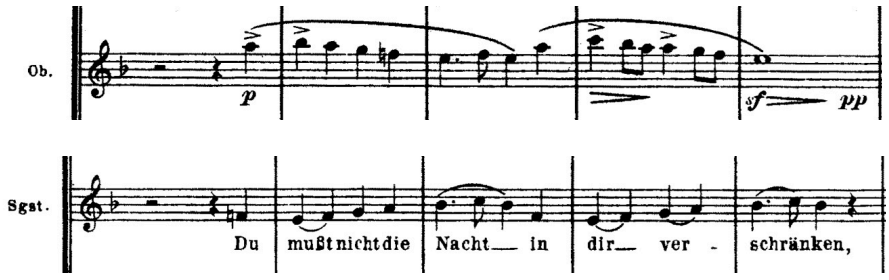

Figure 1.15 - "Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n" mm. 47-51

Mahler further captures this contradiction with the setting of the final words, “Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt!” as the voice and oboe come together to cadence in unison on the minor third. Together, the voice and oboe seem to embody the cruel paradox of life moving forward after the death of a loved one.

20th Century

The oboe in the 20th century had its second major surge in popularity, particularly as a solo instrument. The solo oboe music of the 20th century can best be categorized in two divergent paths: a traditional practice that looked back to the Baroque and Classical eras for inspiration and the avant-garde that sought to invent entirely new sounds. I will examine how each of these traditions perpetuated the connection between oboe and voice in 20th century literature, starting with the development of the avant-garde.

Modernism

Modernism, especially in the era of both World Wars, examined the broken and ugly sides of the human experience. After Mahler’s death in 1911, composers of the Second Viennese School broke down traditions of tonality in the newfound construction of music through

serialism. As the Italian futurist Luigi Russolo wrote in 1913, "We must break out of this narrow circle of pure musical sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds."[149]

This breaking down of pure musical sounds led to an exploration of instrumental and vocal extended techniques. Among the earliest examples of extended techniques was the use of *Sprechstimme,* which "attempted to develop the fluid interchange between song and speech."[150] Arnold Schoenberg's employment of *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) is one notable early example; text and sound no longer ran together along parallel descriptive logics. Several decades would pass, however, before composers of the avant-garde would explore similarly bold extended techniques for woodwind instruments. As with many other eras in music history, the conventions of vocal art preceded those of instrumental art.

The oboe was largely associated with conservative musical traditions in the early 20th century. Its signature bold, distinct timbre—not well-suited for blending with other instruments—gave it a less favorable status as a solo and chamber instrument in the previous century than other woodwinds. This may have been why composers like Brahms chose to write instead for the clarinet. As Nora Post points out, "the oboe's liabilities as a chamber and solo instrument were, in fact, its strengths within the orchestra. Utilized there for coloration, its evocative tone epitomized the nineteenth century quest for the individual, the unique, and the exotic."[151]

Early Modernist composers, like Edgard Varèse and Stephan Wolpe, however, took advantage of the oboe's distinctive timbral characteristics, and explored the extremes of the instrument's range, dynamics, and articulation. The more prominent composers of the 1920's and 30's avant-garde, like Schoenberg and Webern, did not explore the extremes of the oboe in

[149] Grove, "Modernism."
[150] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe,* 268.
[151] Nora Post, "Development of Contemporary Oboe Techniques," 19.

their writing for the instrument. Varèse on the other hand, "sought deliberately to transgress the boundaries of the idiomatic."[152] His 1924 chamber octet, *Octandre,* begins with an oboe solo that, within ten bars, crescendos to a flutter-tongued G6, marked *ffff,* an appallingly difficult gesture. Oboists who are accustomed to performing in orchestras likely do not have reeds that can play both so loud and high.

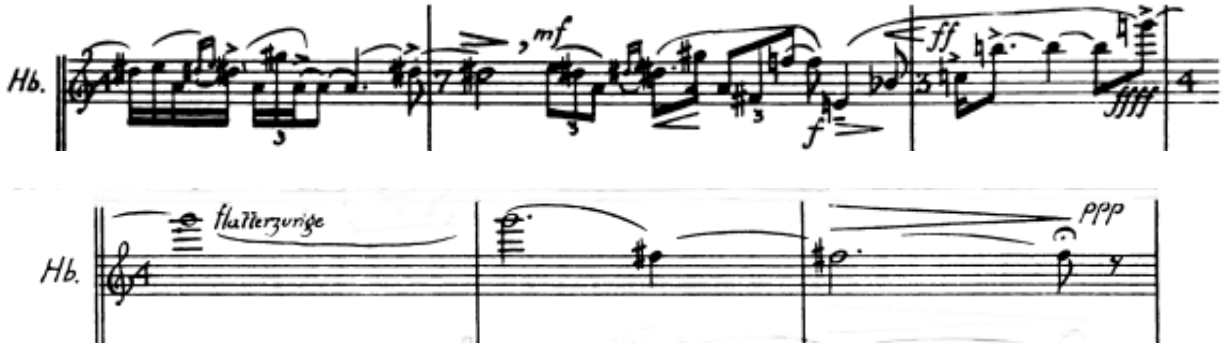

Figure 1.16 - *Octandre* oboe part mm. 7-12

Varèse's oboe writing makes that of Gustav Mahler look comparatively tame. Though the most boundary defying extended techniques for the oboe weren't explored until the 1960's and 70's, the pioneers of the avant-garde oboe, most notably Heinz Holliger, were surely influenced by the work of Varèse.

Extended Techniques

"The oboe has done surprisingly well in the twentieth-century. So well, in fact, that one can only conclude that the oboe's "personality," its fatal flaw in nineteenth century solo and chamber literature, may now be its greatest asset."[153]

While the 19th century was largely defined more by advances in oboe design than repertoire, the 20th century saw almost no additional technical developments to the oboe. The Triébert système 6, popularized in the 1880's, is largely the same "Conservatoire system"

[152] Ibid., 20.
[153] Post, 146.

instrument we play on today. What has changed though, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, is how composers have expanded the technical possibilities of the standardized oboe design. Heinz Holliger pioneered this exploration more than anyone else. He expanded upon the increasing demands on wind instruments from the early 20th century, particularly those of Edgar Varèse and Stephan Wolpe, and began to explore the full potential of extended techniques for the instrument.

Sequenza VII

As Nora Post wrote in 1978,

> In recent years, virtuoso instrumentalists have commissioned a repertoire which demands new technical skills from the player. These works are often characterized by a close collaboration between composer and performer in the creation of music directed at the development of new instrumental sounds and, in some cases, tailored to the special abilities of a single performer.[154]

One of the most potent examples of this type of collaboration is in the work of Heinz Holliger and Luciano Berio. Their well-documented professional relationship culminated in one of the greatest, and most challenging works for solo oboe of the 20th century, *Sequenza VII,* a piece Jacqueline Leclair describes as an "imaginative, beautifully written work that fits the oboe like a glove."[155]

Holliger first introduced himself to Berio by letter in March of 1969. Having heard some of Berio's growing collection of *Sequenzas* for solo instrument, Holliger wrote to ask if Berio would consider composing one for the oboe. Between Holliger's commissioning letter in March and the premiere of *Sequenza VII* at Darmstadt in August 1969 of the completed version we recognize today, the two exchanged letters detailing their collaborative process. These letters

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[154] Post, 1.
[155] Jacqueline Leclair, ""Luciano Berio, *Sequenza VIIa* (1969/200) Analysis," 97.

highlight Holliger's level of engagement with the compositional process, not only in terms of instrumental suggestions, but stylistic ones as well.

Holliger, who is recognized as a composer just as much as a performer, helped Berio explore a range of extended techniques throughout the early process. He pointed out to Berio that the note B4 is the oboe's single note with the widest possibility of timbral variance. Berio uses this pitch as the basis for the entire work, composing a *klangfarbenmelodie* across the first line of *Sequenza VII* asking the oboist to choose five different timbral fingerings for B4.

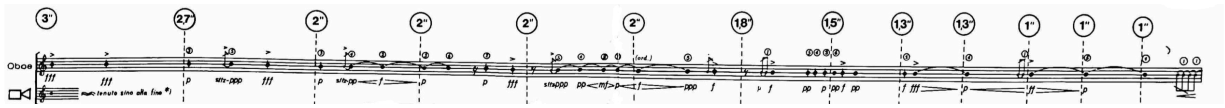

Figure 1.17 - *Sequenza VII* line 1

Berio sent Holliger a completed first draft in May 1969. This sketch is largely similar to the published version we know today, however, some of the most notable characteristics of idiomatic oboe writing and style are missing. On an instrumental level, Holliger suggests incorporating more multiphonics and overblown sounds to invigorate the dramatic middle section, setting up a starker contrast for the quiet, introspective ending. The section below—line 11, m. 10 through line 12, m. 4—contains some of the densest writing in the whole piece, including overblown sounds, flutter tonguing, multiphonics, and double tonguing at aggressively loud dynamics.

Figure 1.18 - *Sequenza VII* line 11, 10 - line 12, 4

The ending, by contrast, uses double harmonics to achieve a delicate, whispering effect.

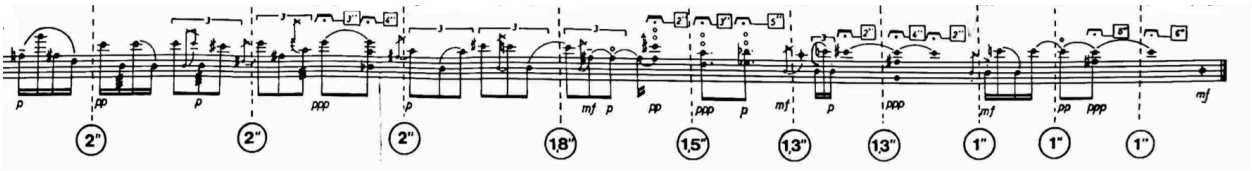

Figure 1.19 - *Sequenza VII* line 13, 3-13

Holliger also helped Berio from a stylistic perspective between the first draft and the final version. The drone of a B4 throughout the work was a suggestion of Holliger's, as well as the proportional notion that determines measure lengths by duration in seconds rather than meter. Holliger's guidance, as both the performer and sponsor of the work, helped incorporate some of the most virtuosic, idiomatic writing for the oboe in the entire literature, elevating *Sequenza VII* to canonic status.[156]

Berio clearly acknowledged that Holliger was more than just a passive performer of his work. In the liner notes of Holliger's first solo LP of new music for the oboe, *The Spectacular Heinz Holliger*, Berio writes,

> Today the modern soloist - like every modern researcher in every field - both needs and is able to have an extremely broad angle of vision over historical time. He can interpret the experiences of the past as well as those of the immediate present. In contrast to the virtuoso, he can master extensive historical perspectives, since he uses his instrument not only as a means of pleasure, but of insight (of intellectual analysis). So he is in a position to collaborate in the music and contribute to it, instead of "serving" it with false humility.[157]

[156] Nicolas Donin, "Creative commitments: Luciano Berio, Heinz Holliger and the Genesis of the Sequenza VII for Oboe," 103-117.
[157] *The Spectacular Heinz Holliger Plays Music by Berio, Castiglioni, Holliger, Huber, Krenek, Lehmann,* Philips 6500 202, LP.

Though this piece doesn't immediately carry a direct connection to the human voice, Burgess and Haynes draw a parallel between Berio's use of timbre as an expressive tool in *Sequenza VII* to some of his earlier vocal works. "The importance placed on timbral effects calls to mind Berio's fascination with language explored in his vocal works written for soprano Cathy Berberian."[158]

Sequenza III

Before his collaboration with Holliger, Berio wrote his *Sequenza III* for the voice. One of Berio's most frequent performer/collaborators was his wife, mezzo-soprano Cathy Berberian. Though they were no longer married in 1966 when she premiered the piece, they still collaborated closely until her death in the early 1980's. A brief look at *Sequenza III* shows how Berio's relationship with language influenced his writing in *Sequenza VII* as well.

Berio has a well-documented history of studying linguistics and the various components of language that may or may not be translatable to musical expression. His relationship with Umberto Eco was particularly influential in how Berio saw semantics and semiotics functioning in music. Berio struggled, however, to assign broad linguistic formalisms to musical analyses. Janet Hander-Powers says,

> While an analogy between language and music served as an analytical theory of relation between music and some meaning attributable to it, [Berio] came to an impasse in transferring common notions of linguistic structure to music and concluded that mere formalisms did not constitute a valid basis for comparison. The whole analogy hinged rather on basic questions how music means anything, and whether that meaning may be comparable to linguistic meaning in any valid sense.[159]

While perhaps not making any sweeping generalizations about music's relationship to linguistics, Berio's philosophy of the intersection between these two fields permeates his music.

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[158] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe,* 280.
[159] Janet Hander-Powers, "Strategies of Meaning: Study of the Aesthetic and the Musical Language of Luciano Berio," 225-26.

As we saw in *Sequenza VII,* Berio explores a full range of timbral shading on a single note for the oboe (Figure 1.17). His fascination with timbre seems to be a landmark of each of his Sequenzas.

In his *Sequenza III* Berio experiments with the timbre of language, broken down into single words and phonemes, as well as laughter as an extended technique in this work. Similar to the *klangfarbenmelodie* in the opening of *Sequenza VII,* Berio explores how widely a singer can vary vocal timbre on a single pitch by changing vowel shapes.

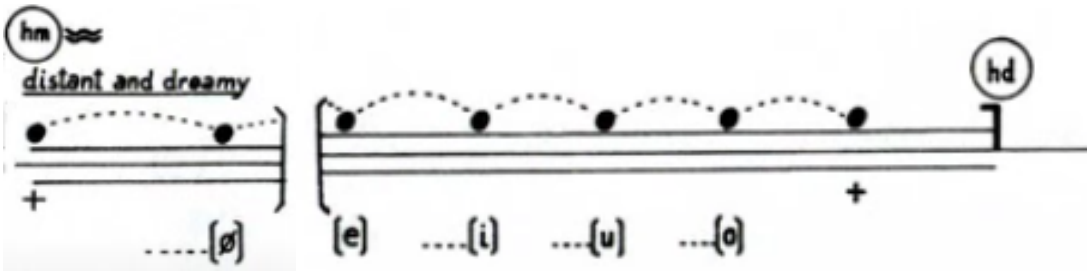

Figure 1.20 - *Sequenza III* Shifting Vowels

Laughter is one of the most notable vocal techniques in Berberian's repertoire, and Berio explores contrasting emotions that laughter can portray. The score conveys laugher with carefully notated and rapidly changing moods. ("nervous, tense, open, frantic, anxious, whining, wistful, and witty"). Other extended techniques—spoken words, closed mouth sounds, tongue clicks, and shortening text into single words and phonemes—are sprinkled throughout the piece, sometimes underscoring and sometimes obscuring the text.

Berio commissioned the text from Swiss poet, Markus Kutter, who composed nine short phrases that Berio combines in various ways:

give me	a few words	for a woman
to sing	a truth	allowing us
to build a house	without worrying	before night comes

Berio never composes a full iteration of the text, and rarely combines more than a few words from the individual phrases. The example below provides a glimpse into one of the most intelligible text settings, yet even here, the phonemes and extended techniques prevent the listener from clearly deciphering what the singer is communicating.

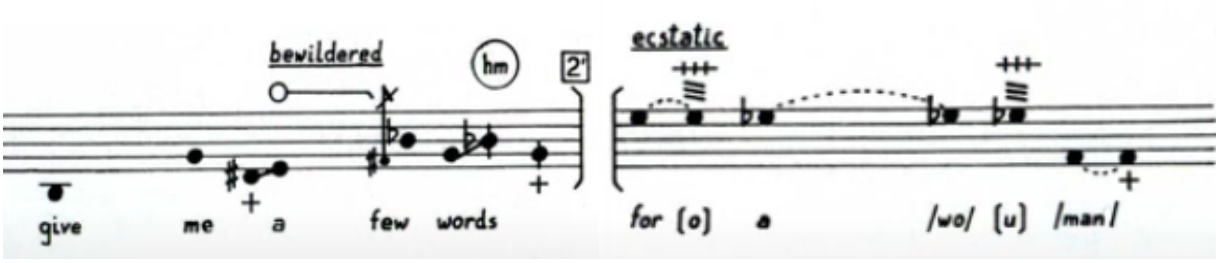

Figure 1.21 - *Sequenza III* Broken Text

An interview with Berberian provides a glimpse into her influence over the piece.

> We met in June in London, and he had modified *Sequenza* for the BBC performance, but it was not completed, so we talked about it, he showed it to me and I said 'Listen, that low note, that low D, I can't do it that late in the piece, I need to do it earlier or I won't have enough strength.' So he changed that and some other small things…and the piece was a lot better. Of course when I talk about it with him to this day, he maintains that the piece was always like this from the beginning! But I have the scores to prove it! And I'll tell you more, there are three versions: the original one for Bremen, the one for London, and the definitive one which reflects all the changes we did during the recording[160]

Listening to a variety of recordings of Berio's *Sequenzas* gives you a sense of the freedom he allows performers to show off their personal, unique virtuosities. Comparing the recordings of Heinz Holliger with François Leleux highlights the differences between the two oboist's particular skill. Holliger's recording sounds more robotic and automated; he flies through the piece with precision and incorporates a massive dynamic spectrum.[161] Leleux's on

[160] Kate Meehan, "Not just a Pretty Voice: Cathy Berberian as Collaborator, Composer and Creator," 113.
[161] *The Spectacular Heinz Holliger Plays Music by Berio, Castiglioni, Holliger, Huber, Krenek, Lehmann,* Philips 6500 202, LP.

the other hand is much more dolce and vocal. He captures Berio's singing quality, leaning into the suspended, monophonic moments, but his recording is nearly a minute longer.[162]

A similar comparison between the *Sequenza III* recordings of Cathy Berberian and Sarah Maria Sun shows an even more extreme contrast. Berberian follows the score more precisely and uses more subtlety in her character contrasts. She treats the linguistic components more as muttered nonsense than words with meaning.[163] Sun, however, interprets Berio's piece as a rich, dramatic narrative. She takes extreme liberties with the music and plays into the mania of the character contrasts. She places the poetry of Kutter at the center of her performance, clearly annunciating his words with theatricality. Sun's recording lasts two and a half minutes longer than Berberian's and sounds almost like a different piece.[164]

[162] Leleux, François, *Solo Oboe*, CD.
[163] Cathy Berberian, "Berio Sequenza III," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGovCafPQAE.
[164] Sarah Maria Sun, "Luciano Berio: Sequenza III by Sarah Maria Sun," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFb0Nz8cVq4.

Poetic Oboe

Not all solo music of the 20th century had a Modernist influence. The other primary stream of oboe playing followed a more traditional path and looked back to the Baroque and Classical eras for inspiration. The term "performance practice" was first popularized in the 20th century, as performers and scholars sought to revive earlier customs and conventions. Several important oboists, Holliger included, committed to programming and reviving music of the Baroque and Classical eras, including concerti by Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, whose Concerto in C, K 314 was considered lost until 1950. This renaissance also inspired some neo-Baroque and neo-Classical compositions in the early 20th century symphonic repertoire. Some of the oboe's greatest orchestral solos—Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin,* Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* and *Symphony of Psalms*—came out of these traditions.

Looking back toward 18th century performance practice, particularly in the realm of rhetoric, a connection can be drawn between the instrumental and the poetic. A small body of work for oboe, largely outside of Modernism, was written in the mid-20th century. The "gleichsam redende" oboe quality that Mattheson speaks of "has inspired several modern composers to write works for it with strong ties to poetic texts."[165]

The best-known example of a contemporary work for oboe with poetic implications is Benjamin Britten's *Six Metamorphoses After Ovid.* Britten prefaces each movement with a single-sentence summary of a corresponding myth, showing a character transformation, which Britten reflects in the music.[166] For example, "Niobe," the third movement figure, "who, lamenting the death of her fourteen children, was turned into a mountain," is conveyed by a

[165] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 292.
[166] Ibid.

transformation of the main melody from *mf piangendo* in the opening bars to *pp senza espressivo* at the movement's close.

I will next examine two important 20th century works for the oboe and voice that exemplify the poetic oboe tradition.

Ten Blake Songs

A piece that explores the poetic implications of the oboe even more directly than Britten's *Metamorphoses* is Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Ten Blake Songs* (1957). This work was one of the last pieces the prolific English composer wrote at the end a compositional career spanning more than six decades. Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was commissioned to compose music for the film, *The Vision of William Blake,* celebrating the bicentennial of William Blake's birth. The work is based on William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* poetry collections.[167]

Vaughan Williams was a lifelong devotee of English folk songs, which he began collecting as early as 1903. In his biography of the composer, Michael Kennedy describes how Vaughan Williams's compositional style was influenced by the folk song idiom, which he understood to connect past, present, and future. He believed song was "the most universal form of music 'because it is the most direct expression of personal and intimate emotions.'"[168]

Vaughan Williams set ten of Blake's poems to music for oboe and tenor, but the range of these songs fits the tessitura of most other voice types as well. Many sopranos and mezzo-sopranos have performed and recorded these pieces. In my experience, performing this piece with a female voice allows for more seamless voice crossing between the two instruments.

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[167] Grove, "Ralph Vaughan Williams."
[168] Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 29-30.

“The Lamb”

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
    Little lamb, who made thee?
    Dost thou know who made thee?

    Little lamb, I’ll tell thee;
    Little lamb, I’ll tell thee;
He is callèd by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by his name.
    Little lamb, God bless thee!
    Little lamb, God bless thee![169]

The fifth movement, *The Lamb,* provides an opportunity to explore said fluid voice crossing. The analogous tessitura of the oboe and the soprano voice becomes especially apparent when the instruments are close in range. The simplistic folksong vocal melody is wrapped by long, flowing oboe lines that weave in and out of the singer’s words. The contrast between the instruments becomes so minimal that they form a single cohesive sound, following one another at times, and moving in tight counterpoint at other times.

[169] William Blake, *Collected Poems*, 49.

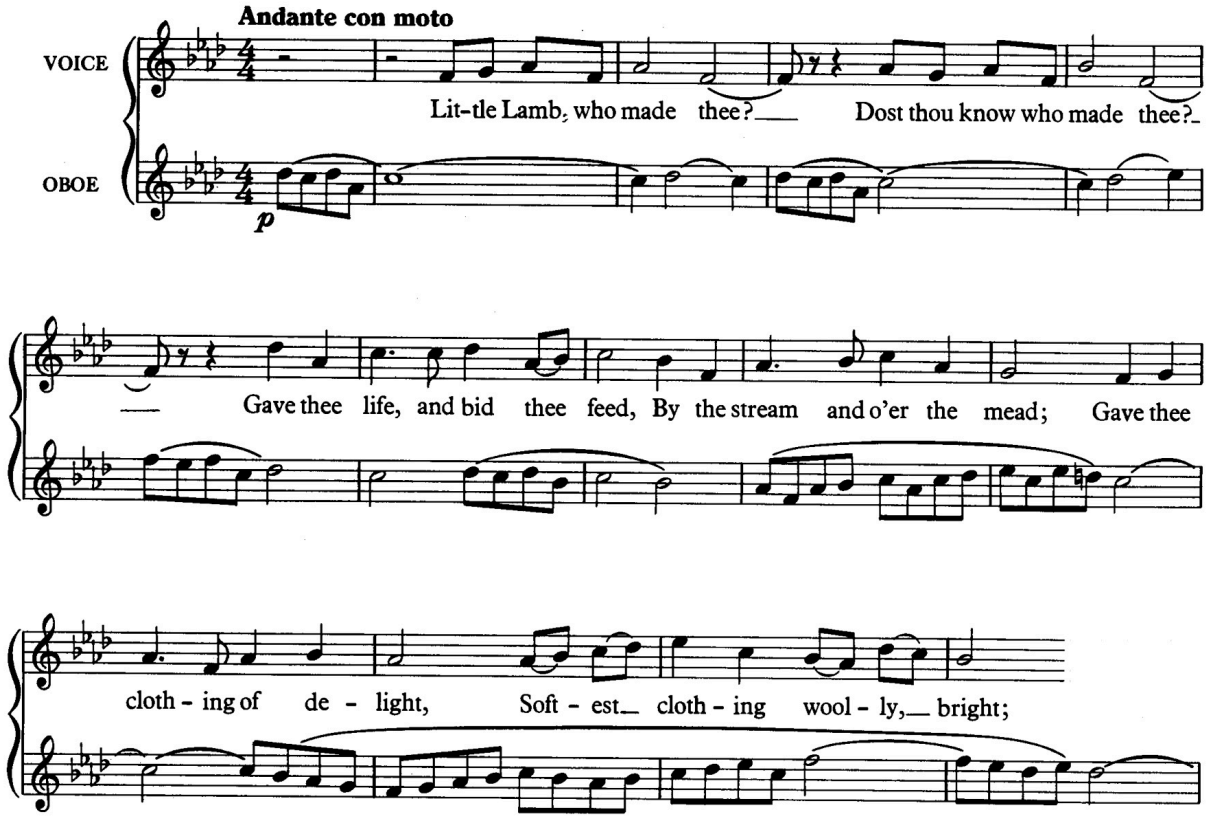

Figure 1.22 - "The Lamb" mm. 1-14

Vaughan Williams beautifully captures the reverence and sense of wonder in Blake's poem, even though he was initially hesitant to compose this music in the first place. According to his wife Ursula's biography of the composer, the production crew for the film commissioned Vaughan Williams to compose music for a specific list of poems they had predetermined. "At first he was not at all enthusiastic. He had always admired Blake as an artist, but he did not care greatly for his poems. However, he said he would see what he could do, stipulating that the songs should not include 'that horrible little lamb—a poem I hate.'"[170]

[170] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 386.

"Ah, Sunflower"

Ah, Sunflower, weary of time,
    Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
    Where the traveler's journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
    And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
    Where my Sunflower wishes to go![171]

Another movement of Vaughan Williams's, "Ah, Sunflower," shows similarly adept writing for both the oboe and voice but communicates a different affect. Blake's poem illustrates a sense of longing, as the metaphor of a climbing sunflower symbolizes the struggle of a traveler's journey through life, ascending toward heaven.

Vaughan Williams uses fewer moments of counterpoint in this movement, rather he lets the individual voices sing for themselves, dovetailing their phrases seamlessly together. The rising and falling pentatonic melody first introduced by the oboe marked *senza misura*, highlights the speaker's turbulent struggle as well as perhaps the circularity of the never-ceasing ascent of the sunflower.

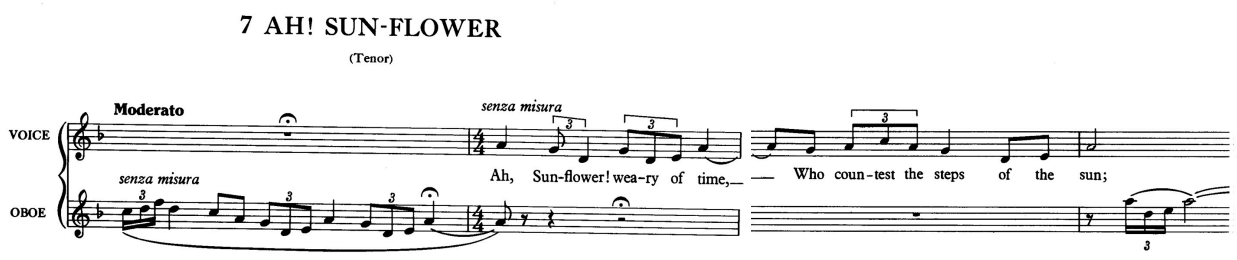

Figure 1.23 - "Ah, Sunflower" mm. 1-4

[171] Blake, 75.

John Edmunds reviewed Vaughan Williams's work in the journal, *Notes,* the year after the premiere, praising the composer's simplicity and integrity.

> This cycle is Vaughan Williams's swan song and in a sense a summing up of his feelings about the solo voice and poetry. The vocal range is modest, the tessitura being suitable for a mezzo or a high baritone, but practical too for most sopranos and tenors. An oboe is used with the voice (though it is by no means merely an accompanying instrument) in seven of the ten songs, the other three being for unaccompanied voice. The songs are predominantly pastoral in character and have immense authority, reflecting the spirit of the most widely venerated English composer of recent times….Perhaps his greatest achievements were in bringing about a creative interaction between Elizabethan and 20th-century music, and in integrating the English folksong into the major genres of "art" music. His bluff honesty in the field of hymnody brought about a heroic cleansing of a medium which before him had been dank with sacred sentimentality. All these interests show up in the Blake songs; the rhythmic flexibility of the Elizabethans, the modal character of the English folksong, the profound reverence of a thoroughly devout man. The Blake poems are beyond praise and Vaughan Williams has set them with beautiful simplicity.[172]

Songs: Twelve Quatrains Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

This last piece is less well-known than the Vaughan Williams but is perhaps the only other example from the 20th century of an oboe and voice duet without other accompaniment instruments. Dorothy Rudd Moore (b. 1940) is a composer, poet, and singer based in New York City. She is recognized for her close collaboration with Langston Hughes, setting several of his poems to music, and also for writing an opera about the life of Frederick Douglass.

According to Latoya Lain, Moore studied the voice from a young age, which has had a profound impact on her setting of texts and writing vocal music. Moore's melodic lines, although sometimes challenging from a tonal standpoint, are easy to sing with a properly developed technique. Early experiences writing poetry also positioned her well to compose art song.

> Being a poet in her own right, she has high literary taste and is attracted to poetry that is powerful and commanding in its approaches to speaking about the experiences of black people in America. She is very careful in her selection of poetry and quite meticulous in

[172] John Edmunds, *Notes,* 153-54.

> its treatment through her music. She reads the poem, studies it, and memorizes it until what she brings forth musically seems innate.[173]

Helen Walker-Hill confirms this meticulous approach to text in Moore's vocal music. "Each work [of poetry] is approached with a fresh outlook in terms of function, its text, or its instrumentation. She has no preconceived notions of how it will sound, and each work suggests and assumes its own form."[174]

The *Twelve Quatrains from the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* formed Moore's first song cycle, written while she was an undergraduate student at Howard University. According to the score, she sets the 1859 translations of the poetry by Edward FitzGerald. After graduating from Howard, Moore studied with Nadia Boulanger at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, France, on a Lucy Moten Followship in 1963. Boulanger was particularly impressed with her setting of this work for oboe and mezzo-soprano and gave her an opportunity to have it premiered in the Jeu de Paume Hall at the Palace of Fontainebleau.[175]

Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) is considered to be the founder of Persian poetry and astronomy, nicknamed the "Astronomer-Poet of Persia." Several *Rubaiyat* (quatrains) of verse have been attributed to Khayyam, but these were made famous by the 1859 adaptation of the work by English poet, Edward FitzGerald. FitzGerald's work is controversial for its loose interpretation of the original source material. Michael Kearney, in a biographical preface to FitzGerald's fourth edition of the book, describes the poet's work more as a transmogrification than a translation, claiming that "there is more of FitzGerald than there is of Khayyam in the English *Rubaiyat,* and that the old Persian simply afforded themes for the Anglo-Irishman's display of poetic power." Though Kearney also mentions that "even when he oversteps the

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[173] Latoya Lain, "An Examination of the Compositional Style of Dorothy Rudd Moore and Its Relationship to the Literary Influence of Langston Hughes," iv.
[174] Helen Walker-Hill, *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music*, 228.
[175] Ibid., 222.

largest license allowed to a translator, his phrases reproduce the spirit and manner of the original with a nearer approach to perfection than would appear possible."[176]

The first quatrain Moore sets corresponds to the text of FitzGerald's seventh quatrain.

1.
Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly – and lo! the Bird is on the Wing.[177]

Though I have not encountered any writing that connects Moore's piece with Vaughan Williams, I do wonder if she was familiar with the *Ten Blake Songs,* premiered just five years earlier. Moore's treatment of the interaction between the oboe and voice reminds me of Vaughan Williams's in "Ah, Sunflower." Moore centers the tonal language of this quatrain around the whole tone scale rather than the minor pentatonic scale Vaughan Williams uses, but the sinuous, wavering oboe writing is very similar.

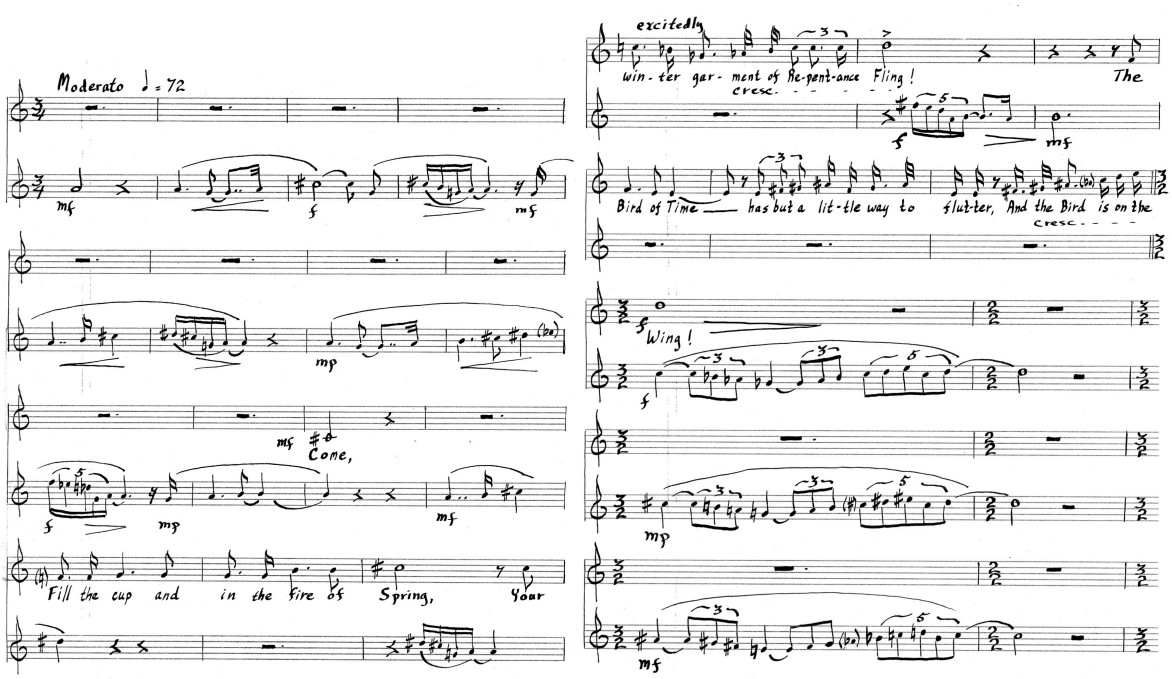

Figure 1.24 - "Quatrain 1"

[176] Omar Khayyám, *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám: The Astronomer-Poet of Persia*, 19.
[177] Ibid., 57.

Like Vaughan Williams, Moore seems to give each performer a chance to show off, setting each part mostly solo and without counterpoint. Both FitzGerald's quatrain and Blake's poem evoke similar imagery: flying, climbing, gazing upward toward a future promise of the yet-to-come.

I might draw another comparison between the musical language of Moore's eleventh and twelfth—Fitzgerald's 100th and 101st—quatrains (combined with an *attacca*) and Vaughan Williams's movement, "Cruelty Has a Human Heart," based on Blake's poem, "A Divine Image."

11.
Yon rising moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same garden—and for *one* in vain.

12.
And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass![178]

"A Divine Image"

Cruelty has a human heart,
    And jealous a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
    And Secrecy the human dress.

The human dress is forged in iron,
    The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnace sealed,
    The human heart its hungry gorge.[179]

[178] Khayyám, 81.
[179] Blake, 81.

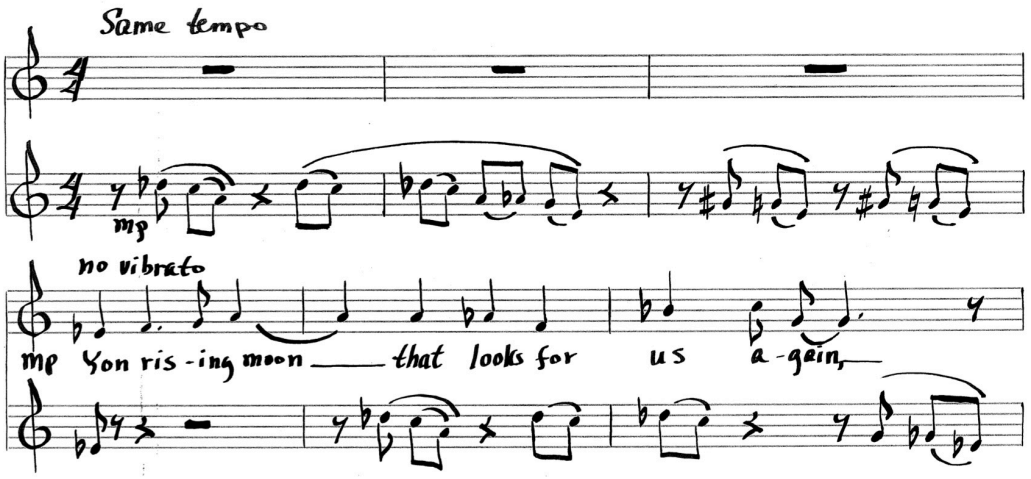

Figure 1.25 - "Quatrain 11" mm. 1-6

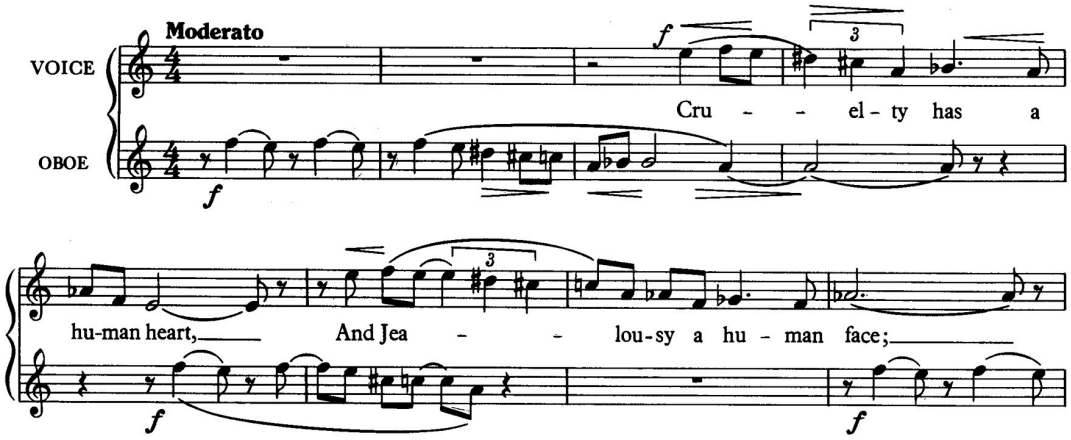

Figure 1.26 - "Cruelty Has a Human Heart" mm. 1-8

The sighing semitone gestures in the oboe line, separated by rests, create a sense of anxiety. The language of both texts suggests an uneasiness, which each composer sets differently. Moore begins the mezzo-soprano's line in a lower register, marked "non-vibrato," as the singer outlines the rising of the moon with a whole tone scale. Vaughan Williams, on the other hand, gives the singer an impassioned entrance high in the vocal tessitura, that descends with atonal chromaticism.

Moore's piece builds to a dramatic finale, with similar energy (and on the same note) as "Cruelty Has a Human Heart," while Vaughan Williams allows the tension to slowly unwind with a decrease in volume. Both end with the oboe and voice in a tight dissonance in the same register.

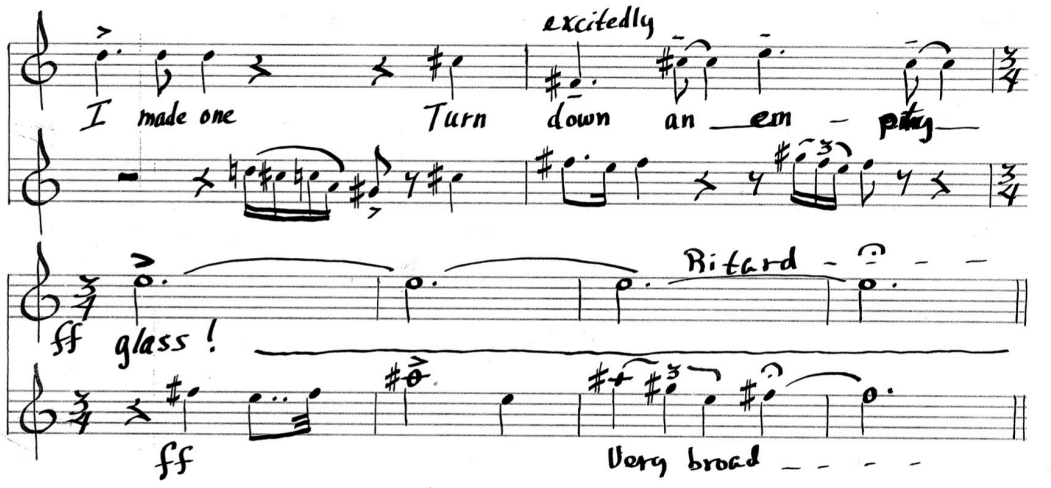

Figure 1.27 - "Quatrain 12" mm. 7-12

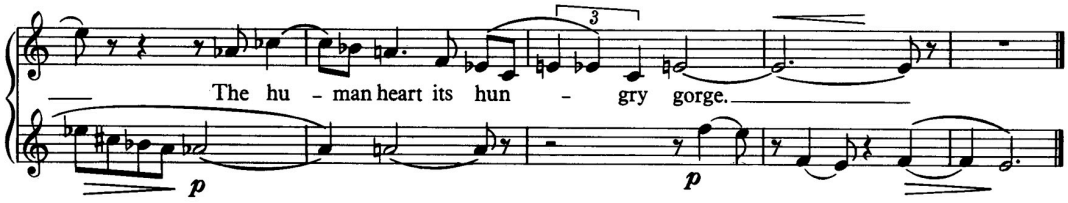

Figure 1.28 - "Cruelty Has a Human Heart" mm. 23-27

The oboe's emphatic quarter-note triplets ending Moore's movement immediately call to mind Vaughan Williams's setting of "hungry gorge."

Extra-musical Oboe and Voice Comparisons

The late 20th century brought an additional parallel between the oboe and voice. Developing x-ray technology allowed a glimpse inside the human vocal mechanism, progressing the scientific understanding of the acoustic and physiological similarities between the instruments. A 1980 article in the IDRS journal, *The Double Reed,* by Australian oboist, Jirí Tancibudek explores the age-old connection between the two instruments—citing the words of Johann Mattheson, Leopold Mozart, and Heinz Holliger—and uses newfound research on the mechanisms of the human voice to support the claims that the oboe most closely parallels the human voice.

> The mechanism and function of the oboe reed can be compared to that of the so-called human "vocal bands" (ligamenta vocalia). These two longitudinal strands of elastic membrane (conus elasticus) cover the inner muscles of the vocal folds (Mn. thyreoarytænoidei) Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling explain that it is 'the vibratory action of the stretched vocal bands which, by turning the outflowing breath into sound, is most responsible for the production of voice.' This principle of sound production is reasonably comparable to the way the oboe tone is achieved. The two finely scraped blades of cane in the oboe reed are vibrated by the exhaled breath.[180]

The vocal pedagogues Tancibudek mentions, Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling go on to clarify that "it is not [merely] the outflowing of breath that sets the vocal cords vibrating; breath is simply the element that carries and forms the sound." The results of their anatomical research indicate that there is a "great measure of self-activity possessed by the inner muscle of the vocal folds." The vocal folds, therefore, don't function like the passive reed pipe of an organ or a bagpipe, but rather require subtle manipulation to achieve controlled vibrations. An oboist's embouchure works the same way.

[180] Tancibudek, 7.

While the "vocal bands" that produce vibrations in the human voice are not visible without x-ray technology, Tancibudek points to how the oboist's musculature control mechanisms can be observed.

> The face of a fine oboist playing an expressive solo reveals a continuous and very agile micro-movement of various facial muscles. Sometimes even a slight movement of the player's ears is noticeable. The perpetual activity of the muscles reflects the many automatic delicate adjustments of the player's lips which control the embouchure. The more sensitive embouchure can usually achieve a more effective control over the reed. The reed is virtually stimulated by the embouchure to the most desirable vibratory reactions. Tiniest changes in lip pressure or their position on the reed, assisted by the exhaled air stream, result in creating, suppressing and mixing together various vibrations in the reed or its portions and thus help the player to obtain the desirable tone quality.[181]

Tancibudek's writing not only reveals the importance of an agile and flexible embouchure, but also shows that the reed itself—its variables of size, shape, and hardness—control the response and pitch of oboe tone. "As the quality of the human voice can be greatly affected by the degree of flexibility and elasticity of the vocal folds, so can the quality of the oboe tone be considerably influence by the quality, density and various other characteristics of the cane from which the reed is made."[182] As oboe enthusiasts have intuitively understood for centuries, no two oboists playing on the same reed and the same oboe will sound exactly the same.

[181] Tancibudek, 7.
[182] Ibid., 8.

2) The Oboe and Voice in New Works

Collaborative Process

"Ten good composers are often not capable of creating a single good singer; but a single good singer…is easily capable of inspiring ten good composers, so that the latter sometimes do not know whence the magnificent ideas come to them." – Mattheson Part 2, Ch. 4, 62

Composers often write music for specific performers whose particular strengths and skills open up the composer's imagination. We've already explored how Bach's oboe repertoire took shape in part because of his close working relationship to Caspar Gleditsch. We also saw how Salieri wrote a role in *L'Europa Riconosciuta* specifically for Franziska Lebrun Danzi, supported in her showpiece aria "Quando più erato freme" by an oboe obbligato line that seemingly only her husband, August Lebrun, could play. In the 20th century, composers were pushing the boundaries of vocal and instrumental writing to new extremes. These close working relationships—like that of Luciano Berio with Cathy Berberian and Heinz Holliger—led to an even wider expansion of technical facility on both these instruments. Each of these examples reinforces the point that new musical and technical developments come out of the creative nexus between composer and intended interpreter.

Linda Hirst, a 20th-century vocalist, new music performer and contemporary of Berberian, describes the process of establishing performance traditions of new repertoire in two stages. The first stage involves working with a composer to secure the boundaries of a new performance tradition, and the second follows as the performer imprints his or her own artistry within those boundaries without the guidance of the composer. She shares two anecdotes about her notable collaborations to illustrate the first stage of the process.

Composer/performer collaborations working to define new performance traditions can happen in multiple ways. Hirst recounts her experience working with James Dillon on his duo for soprano and double bass, *Roaring Flame*, where she learned to sing in Gaelic. When she sang for

the composer, he realized what he had conceived in his mind was not what Hirst was communicating. Dillon then chose to adapt his expectations based on what he was hearing, rather than attempting to adhere exactly to his original conception for the piece. Hirst's experience working with Helmut Lachenmann on the flute, cello, and voice piece, *temA*, on the other hand, was more an exercise in matching the composer's precise design. In contrast to Dillon, Lachenmann was more hands on in his approach to helping Hirst interpret his score, guiding her through each small detail of sound, discussing and unpacking the minutiae of vowel shape. Though these composers differed in their collaboration styles, their end goal was the same, to define the boundaries more exactly of the emerging vocal style/tradition. Hirst felt confident exploring her own creativity within that field of understanding, knowing she worked "on the basis of an authentic sense of the composer's musical identity and points of reference."[183]

The second stage of this process happens when other performers, usually those who have no personal contact with the composer, imprint their own artistry onto a piece. According to Hirst, "Their view of a work may have been partly formed on the basis of being taught it, or through other forms of transmission, particularly through recorded performances, in which constituent elements can be separately isolated and either imitated or reappraised and done slightly differently."[184] The diversity of Berio *Sequenza III* and *Sequenza VII* recordings exemplify this idea. Though we know Berberbian's recording represents the result of a close collaboration with the composer himself, by no means is her recording the definitive interpretation of the piece. Other sopranos, like Sarah Maria Sun, have brought their own sensibilities and technical virtuosities to Berio's work, making the piece unique to themselves. The same can be said of Francois Leleux's recording of *Sequenza VII*. It sounds different from

[183] Linda Hirst and David Wright. "Alternative Voices: Contemporary Vocal Techniques," In *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, edited by John Potter, 192-93.
[184] Ibid., 193.

Holliger's in many ways, and it retains some of Leleux's personal artistry, while still adhering to the boundaries of the performance tradition.

To me, this highlights the necessity of close collaborations between composers and performers. Performers cannot be merely passive interpreters but must work with composers to establish new traditions in order to keep their practices relevant. The more performers can foster a personal sense of technique and expression, the more they will inspire composers to write music and create new performance practices.

In this section, I will analyze five new works for the oboe and voice, all of which were the result of close working relationships between composer and performer(s). I conducted interviews with each of the four composers—Ryan McMasters, Kerrith Livengood, Nima Hamidi, and Baldwin Giang—as well as the three singers—Jennifer Beattie, Amy Petrongelli, and Alexandra Porter—with whom I collaborated in the premiere of each work. I will include both composer and performer perspectives in my analysis. I will support my analyses with score examples, all staves of which may be assumed to be in treble clef.

Performer Bios

Below are the publicized bios for my three primary collaborators in the presented works: Jennifer Beattie, Amy Petrongelli, and Alexandra Porter.

Jennifer Beattie

Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Beattie, called a "smashing success" (San Francisco Examiner) and praised for her "warmth" (New York Times) and "exuberant voice and personality" (Opera News), revels in performing everything from traditional to brand-new classical repertoire, as well as engaging in ongoing collaborations with performance, visual, jazz, folk, and theater artists. Her projects this fall include creating the role of Queen Barbora in the world premiere of *The Black Queen* (www.queen.black), a sonic meditation and theatrical experience she co-created with Juraj Kojš and Adam Marks (premiering in both Miami and Copenhagen); a residency on writing for the voice with the undergraduate composition seminar at Yale University with her duo Albatross; and singing the role of Gertrude Stein in the New York premiere of award-winning composer Tom Cipullo's opera, *After Life* (http://www.chelseaopera.org/season.html).

Jennifer has been a featured soloist with organizations including Opera Philadelphia, The National Opera Orchestra at the Kennedy Center; The Philadelphia Orchestra; The Oregon Bach Festival; the Columbus Symphony Orchestra; Symphony in C; Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia; the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Brooklyn Art Song Society; the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago; Malibu's Stotsenberg Recital Series w/ John Musto at the piano; the National Arts Club NYC; Argento Chamber Ensemble at the Park Avenue Armory; JACK Quartet; Aizuri Quartet; Argus Quartet; and the Lake George Music Festival.

A passionate voice in the creation of new music, Jennifer has collaborated with and premiered works by composers including Lembit Beecher, Jon Irabagon, Laura Schwendinger, Kathryn Alexander, Kerrith Livengood, Tom Cipullo, Jeremy Gill, and Juraj Kojš. She was also a founding faculty member and vocalist-in-residence for several seasons at the New Music on the Point Festival in VT. Jennifer is a member of chamber music duos Albatross, with pianist Adam Marks; So Much Hot Air, with oboe/English horn player Zachary Pulse, and Spacepants, with violist/composer Diana Wade. She also serves as co-director of Artists at Albatross Reach, a retreat for the development of weird, wonderful new work and artistic collaborations in northern California.[185]

[185] http://www.jenniferbeattie.com/bio.

Amy Petrongelli

Lauded in the New York Times for her "admirable fluidity," soprano Amy Petrongelli revels in singing music of all different periods and styles. She has fostered a diverse solo performance career that encompasses Haydn's *Creation* in Carnegie Hall to Berio's *Sequenza III* at the Radio Nacional Córdoba in Argentina.

Amy's commitment to musical collaboration has led her to fellowships at summer programs such as the Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Tanglewood Music Center, Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar, and New Music on the Point. This dedication has also driven her to work closely with living composers, helping to about bringing alive new solo and chamber works for the voice. Most recently, Amy joined Houston Grand Opera to premiere the role of Margie in Some Light Emerges, by the award-winning creative trio of composer Laura Kaminsky and librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed.

In 2014, Amy helped to found the Khemia Ensemble, a chamber ensemble that seeks to promote cultural exchange through contemporary music. Now in its third season, the Khemia Ensemble has led several residencies in both North and South America including the University of Michigan, Tufts University, the University of Missouri, the National University of Bogota, and the National University of Cordoba. The ensemble has been featured on festivals and concert series such as Strange Beautiful Music in Detroit, the third annual New Music Gathering, Latin IS America at Michigan State University and the Biennial New Music Festival at the National University of Cordoba.

Past operatic performances include include Despina in *Cosi fan tutte*, Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi, Amy in Little Women, Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*. Also an avid recitalist, Amy has appeared in recital across the Midwest and East Coast for organizations such as the Casement Fund Recital Series in Brooklyn, NY, The Block in Muskegon, MI, and the Contemporary Undercurrent of Song Project in Princeton, NJ. Amy has had the honor of working closely with artists such as Dawn Upshaw, Stephanie Blythe, Lucy Shelton, Tony Arnold, Martin Katz, Kathleen Kelly, Howard Watkins, Alan Smith, and Timothy Cheek.

A passionate educator, Amy has taught voice at the Pennsylvania State University, the University of Michigan, the University of Akron, Eastern Michigan University, and Saginaw Valley State University. She holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Central Michigan University, as well as both an MM and DMA in Vocal Performance from the University of Michigan.

Amy is currently an Assistant Professor of Voice at Baylor University in Waco, TX, where she can be found running, reading, and searching for the next great microbrew.[186]

[186] https://www.amypetrongelli.com/about.

Alexandra Porter

Alexandra Porter, soprano, is a dedicated performer, programmer, and supporter of contemporary music. Recent performances include the world premiere of Julia Wolfe's *Fire in my mouth* with The Crossing and the New York Philharmonic, George Crumb's *Apparition* with pianist Andrea Lodge, the world premiere of Andrew Lovett's opera *The Analysing Engine* (Sally) at Princeton University, the world premiere of *The Bells* by Juliana Hall, and as a featured soloist in the recording of John Luther Adams' Canticles of the Holy Wind with The Crossing. In 2019, she won a GRAMMY for her work with The Crossing on *The Zealot Canticles* by Lansing McLoskey.

As a musician interested in creating opportunities for her peers, she was artistic director of Contemporary Undercurrent of Song Project, a recital series for new vocal music in Princeton NJ from 2015-19. A passionate educator, she is currently a faculty member at Newton Music Academy. Past posts include adjunct faculty at Muhlenberg College, The College of Saint Elizabeth, and the Mason Gross Extension Division of Rutgers University. Based in Boston, she is the music administrator for St Paul's Choir School and marketing manager of Fifth House Ensemble. She has studied at New Music on the Point, the Cortona Sessions for New Music, the Banff Center for Arts and Creativity, and the Nief Norf Summer Festival and is an alumna of The Pennsylvania State University and Westminster Choir College.[187]

[187] https://www.alexandraportersoprano.com/about.html.

You are Fire by Ryan McMasters

You are Fire is a six-movement work for oboe and mezzo-soprano by Ryan McMasters set to the poetry of Amy Lowell. Jennifer Beattie and I commissioned this piece in the fall of 2016. Each of us had collaborated with McMasters on previous projects, and we were drawn both to his taste in poetry and to the way he writes for the voice. Beattie and I premiered *You Are Fire* at the Philadelphia Insectarium and Butterfly Pavilion in May 2017. We have since performed the piece at the San Francisco Center for New Music, at the museum and artist-residency space Elsewhere in Greensboro, NC, and in Madison, WI at my lecture recital in Collins Recital Hall. In my analysis, I will discuss how the text setting of *You are Fire* challenges conventions of meter, punctuation, and articulation, as well as the divide between the instrumental and vocal.

Ryan McMasters

Ryan McMasters is a Pittsburgh based music maker and PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. As a composer, areas of interest include the study of distortion, setting the poetry of H.D., the use of new technologies in performance and education, and collaborations with the hard sciences, including a 3-month residency with a quantum information system lab. His bass playing credits include such varied groups as Alia Musica, Squonk Opera, and the house band for Red Caiman Media studios. He teaches an equally diverse set of styles from traditional classical methods to the Carol Kaye method for electric bass. His new music band, WOLFTRAP, provides a space to focus on the development of oral traditions for new music making. Ryan holds a Master of Music from The Hartt School in double bass performance and a Bachelor of Music from Duquesne University.[188]

Composer Perspectives

I interviewed McMasters by phone in September 2019. When discussing *You are Fire* and his approach to composition more generally, I took away the following themes from our

[188] https://duq.edu/academics/schools/music/city-music-center/faculty-and-staff/ryan-mcmasters.

conversation: composing for specific performers, creating accessible scores, and using positions of privilege to bring awareness to underrepresented voices.

When I spoke with McMasters, something that made an impression on me was his priority to compose music for specific performers. The way he wrote this piece for Beattie particularly is very clear to me. They first collaborated in 2012, when he composed *The Huntress*, a song cycle featuring mezzo-soprano with text from H.D.'s (Hilda Doolittle) *Sea Garden*. From that experience, he adapted his notation style for Beattie in *You are Fire*, knowing how she handles text in her delivery of spoken and sung poetry. He wanted to leave it as free as possible for her to follow her poetic instincts, something 21st century composers of Western classical music are often hesitant to do.

When I asked McMasters about how he conceptualized writing for the oboe and voice as a duo, he noted that, "the two instruments work very similarly; my focus was less about separating the instruments and more about bringing them together sonically." Often in ensembles of singers and instrumentalists, the voice is usually on top sonically. Compared to the oboe, however, Beattie's mezzo-soprano range does not extend as high. McMasters says he hears the oboe more as the upper descant to the fixed range of the voice.

McMasters and I also spoke at length about the function of a score. Ultimately, he stressed, no matter how a composer decides to represent his or his personal creative ideas—via note heads on a staff, a graphic score, or even Super Collider—"the main job of a score is communication." From our conversation it is clear that McMasters thinks deeply about how he can practice inclusion through the transmission of material by creating scores that are accessible to a variety of performers, especially untrained musicians. His clean, minimalist scores allow performers space to put a personal stamp on the music.

In a resultant discussion about trends of neo-complexity in new music, McMasters asked me if I felt the mental energy needed to perform complexly notated music is worth the effort. "What does the audience get out of hearing a musician struggle through Stockhausen or Ferneyhough? Is it possible to communicate complex ideas in a minimalist score structure?" Part of this endeavor into creating more user-friendly scores involves, as he put it, "finding creative ways to hack up stock Finale." The excerpted examples I have chosen demonstrate the uniqueness of his scores (Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) and their accessibility to a wide range of performers.

McMasters's desire for accessibility naturally attracts him to Imagist poetry in his writing for the voice. The freedom and flexibility of the verse do not demand a precise or complex musical setting. McMasters is currently finishing his dissertation project, an operatic rendering of H.D.'s *Sea Garden*. In *You are Fire*, he chose the particular set of Amy Lowell's poetry for its name ("'Two Speak Together' seems appropriate for a duo"), their clarity of language, and their themes of queer love. He finds Lowell's words "striking" and her syntax very strong.

McMasters uses his position as white, male composer to bring awareness to the work of H.D. and Amy Lowell, who are often overshadowed by the most well-known writer from the Imagism movement, Ezra Pound. H.D. was the first poet that McMasters felt like he could set to music in a way that would make her feel comfortable. "I recognized her voice and her aesthetics and set music to make her happy."[189]

Performer Perspectives

You Are Fire seems to emerge naturally from the 20th century "poetic oboe" tradition, exemplified by the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Dorothy Rudd Moore. My experience

[189] Ryan McMasters, phone interview by author, September 16, 2019.

playing this music has connected me to a rhythm of poetic expression that I hardly deal with as an instrumentalist. Delivery of poetry in this style feels vulnerable and exposed compared to the comfort that a regular, predictable meter provides. This kind of chamber music playing depends on a deeper empathic connection, both between the two performers themselves and between the performers and the words they are communicating. When relying less on an agreed upon metric structure, the language must dictate the flow of the music, like in recitative.

As I showed earlier, 18th century performers and scholars prioritized the rhetorical and communicative elements of performance over the technical. These approaches to poetic music like *You Are Fire* are crucial because the rhythmic and metric information in the score doesn't convey the true nature of the piece. Reading only the notes on the score will completely misrepresent McMasters's intentions. Burgess and Haynes touch on this idea.

> [The] text-fetishism [of observing every note the composer wrote in the score as infallible] is a product of our modern literalist culture that suppresses the live, communicative aspect of musical performance in favor of a 'correct' execution of the score…ultimately, it can be said that for much of the history of Western music, more often than not, 'literal' readings will misrepresent the spirit of the work.[190]

18th century writings about articulation also aimed to enhance rhetorical performance. The applications of rhetoric to poetic music helped instrumental performers determine articulation based on the punctuation of the language, as we saw from the writings of Quantz and Mattheson. The simplicity of *You are Fire* allows the performers, the oboist in particular, to focus on the language and make phrasing and articulation decisions that highlight Lowell's poetry first and foremost. An understanding of rhetorical connections to music can really help oboists interpreting McMasters's music.

One movement in particular, "you stand between…" asks the oboist to become the speaker, delivering the text without an oboe to hide behind, and the mezzo-soprano to

[190] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician,* 190-91.

accompany the poetry with non-verbal sounds. As the score shows (Figure 2.3), this movement can help build ensemble skills. By asking the singer and instrumentalist to step into one another's shoes, McMasters helps the performers understand each other's roles in a direct way, developing a performance practice together that centers the poetry and molds the music around it.

Though McMasters and I never discussed the idea of rhetoric, I can't help but draw parallels between our collaboration on this piece to the offices of *dispositio* and *elecutio.* In making structural decisions, McMasters's priority on the text seems more connected to a Baroque sensibility than a Romantic or contemporary one. The shared responsibility between composer and performer that Quantz stressed was essential to proper *elecutio* feels especially relevant to the work McMasters, Beattie, and I did to bring this piece to life.

Amy Lowell

Amy Lowell is an early 20th century American poet affiliated the Imagism movement. She was born into a Boston Brahmin family, an elite circle of British Protestant origin that was influential in the development of American institutions and culture. Lowell's lineage included clergymen, judges, poets, scholars, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, critics, and horticulturists.[191] As a child, Lowell was a curious lover of nature. She loved to explore the gardens and grounds around Sevenel, her family's estate in Brookline, Massachusetts.[192] She struggled with her gender identity and weight as an adolescent and felt strongly that life would be easier for her as a man. Because of her insecurities, she did not function well in formal education institutions. She felt a deep need to learn, but did so largely by her own undertaking, spending much of her time in the family library at Sevenel and the Boston Athenæum.[193]

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[191] Jean Gould, *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement*, 7-9.
[192] Ibid., 19.
[193] Ibid., 50-54.

In 1912, Lowell met the Broadway actress, Ada Dwyer Russell, who later became her life-long companion, and the basis for much of Lowell's love poems. One of Lowell's most highly regarded collections of poems was published in a 1919 book called *Pictures of the Floating World*, inspired by the genre of Japanese art, Ukiyo-e.[194] The source material for *You are Fire* comes from "Two Speak Together*"* which is the second set of a six-part division called "Planes of Personality," containing poems written between 1914-1919.

Imagism

A brief discussion of the Imagist movement with which Lowell aligned herself will provide poetic context to *You Are Fire.* Stanley Coffman defines the Imagism movement in poetry as "the theory and practice of a group of poets who, between 1912 and 1917, joined in reaction against the careless technique and extra-poetic values of much nineteenth-century verse" These poets were attempting to avoid "earlier romantic posturing and [return] to exact consideration of the external world"[195] This movement was influenced by the aesthetics of Ezra Pound, James Joyce, H. D., Amy Lowell, and D. H. Lawrence. These poets drew inspiration from the French poetry tradition of *vers libre*, which held no rhyme scheme expectations, focusing instead on using precise visual images to illustrate clarity of expression.

The way poets, like Lowell, described this movement often stressed the musicality of poetry not restricted by rhyme schemes, conventions of form, or meter. Stanley Coffman outlines three principles of the movement, as first published in *Poetry* magazine in March 1913:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of a metronome[196]

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[194] Amy Lowell, *Pictures of the Floating World,* vii-viii.
[195] Stanley Coffman, *Imagism*, 3-4.
[196] Ibid., 9.

An interview with Amy Lowell by Joyce Kilmer perpetuates the Imagist connection between language and music.

> Joyce Kilmer: "Miss Lowell," I said, "the opponents of the new poetry [Imagism] generally attack it chiefly on account of its form—or rather, on account of its formlessness. And yet what you have said has to do only with the idea itself. You have said nothing about the way in which the idea is expressed."
>
> Amy Lowell: "There is no special form which is characteristic of the new poetry," said Miss Lowell, "and of course 'formlessness' is a word which is applied to it only by the ignorant. The new poetry is in every form. Edgar Lee Masters has written in *vers libre* and in regular rhythm. Robert Frost writes in blank verse. Vachell Lindsay writes in varied rhyme schemes. I write in both the regular meters and the newer forms, such as *vers libre* and 'polyphonic prose.'"
>
> AL: "*Vers libre* is based upon rhythm. Its definition is 'A verse form based upon cadence rather than upon exact meter.' It is a little difficult to define cadence when dealing with poetry. I might call it the sense of balance. The unit of *vers libre* is the strophe, not the line or the foot, as in regular meter. The strophe is a group of words which round themselves satisfactorily to the ear. In short poems this complete rounding may take place only at the end, making the poem a unit of a single movement, the lines serving only to give the slight up-and-down effect necessary to the voice when the poem is read aloud. In longer poems the strophe may be a group of lines. Poetry being a spoken and not a written art, those not well versed in the various poetic forms will find it simpler to read *vers libre* poems aloud, rather than to try to get their rhythm from the printed page. For people who are used only to the exact meters, the printed arrangement of a *vers libre* poem is a confusing process. To a certain extent cadence is dependent upon quantity—long and short syllables being of peculiar importance. Words hurried over in reading are balanced by words on which the reader pauses. Remember, also, that *vers libre* can be either rhymed or unrhymed."
>
> JK: "'One objection,' I said, 'that many critics bring up against unrhymed poetry is that it cannot be remembered.'"
>
> AL:"'I cannot see that that is of the slightest importance,' Miss Lowell replied. 'The music that we whistle when we come out of the theater is not the greatest music we have heard.'"[197]

The parallels between Imagist poetry and music, particularly form and meter, seem well suited for musical settings of these poems. I will now examine McMasters's setting of Lowell's "Two Speak Together" with examples from three movements of *You are Fire*.

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[197] Joyce Kilmer, "The New Spirit in Poetry: Amy Lowell" in *Literature in the Making and Some of Its Makers*, 256-59.

“the scent of hyacinths”

“Vernal Equinox”

The scent of hyacinths, like a pale mist, lies between
me and my book;
And the South Wind, washing through the room,
Makes the candles quiver.
My nerves sting at a spatter of rain on the shutter,
And I am uneasy with the thrusting of green shoots
Outside, in the night.

Why are you not here to overpower me with your tense and urgent love?[198]

Ryan’s minimalist approach to score construction is exemplified well in the first movement of this piece, “the scent of hyacinths.” He notates no rhythm or meter in the vocal part, specifying “freely” at the top of the score. Ryan asks the oboist to maintain the pulse by breathing slowly in and out through the oboe without a reed while moving fingers to an eighth note beat. The resultant effect lays a foundation of fluid, pitched air noises upon which the vocalist may deliver the text as she pleases. This sound world—perhaps a metaphor for Lowell’s “pale mist”—creates an uneasy feeling, highlighting the speaker’s longing to be overpowered with “tense and urgent love.”

[198] Amy Lowell, *Pictures of the Floating World*, 39.

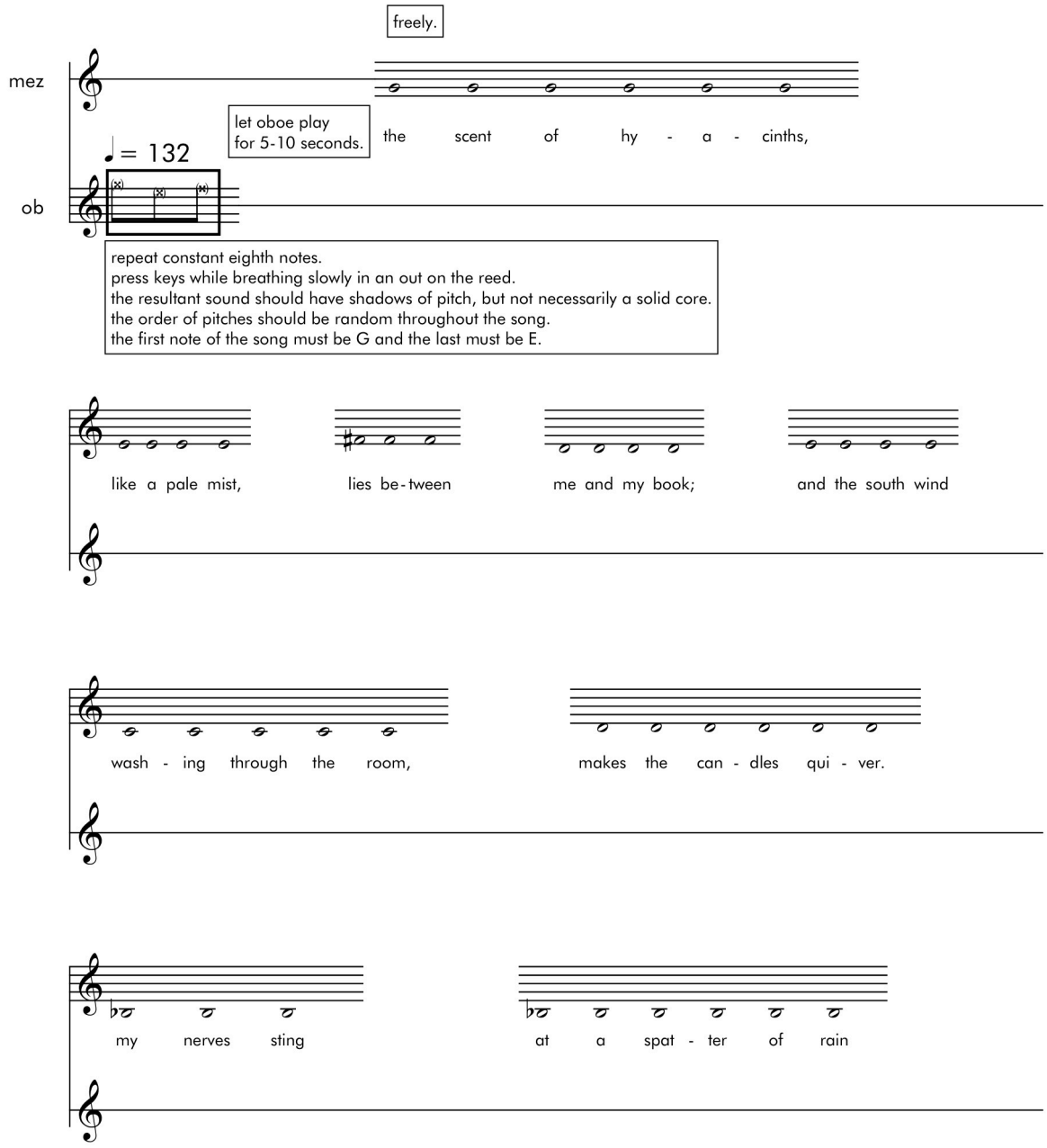

Figure 2.1 - "the scent of hyacinths" pg. 1

“tell me”

“Venus Transiens”

Tell me,
Was Venus more beautiful
Than you are,
When she topped
The crinkled waves,
Drifting shoreward
On her plaited shell?
Was Botticelli’s vision
Fairer than mine;
And were the painted rosebuds
He tossed his lady,
Of better worth
Than the words I blow about you
To cover your too great loveliness
As with a gauze
Of misted silver?

For me, You stand poised
In the blue and buoyant air,
Cinctured by bright winds,
Treading the sunlight.
And the waves which precede you
Ripple and stir
The sands at my feet.[199]

“If these [first] eight lines of ‘Venus Transiens’ were the only fragment left of an unknown poet, we should recognize that the draftsmanship which wrought their cool, controlled, and shining beauty was unique.” -John Livingston Lowes[200]

The score for “tell me” is clearly constructed from a performer’s perspective. The beaming structure connects the oboe and voice lines between their respective staves, showing how the parts relate to one another. Ryan described the process of composing this movement in our interview. “I first printed the text, exactly as it appears with no repetition, onto blank staff paper. Then I filled in the notes around it.” Like in the previous example, Ryan chose to set these

[199] Lowell, 43.
[200] John Livingston Lowes, *Essays in Appreciation*, 171.

words with a free form meter. Based on his prior experience writing for Beattie, he trusted her to sing instinctively and observe the natural rhythm of the poetry instead of relying on a metric structure.

In metered vocal music, instrumentalists can rely on the beat rather than the rhythm of speech to dictate the pacing. In this piece, however, I had to familiarize myself with the cadence of the poetry so I could follow Beattie's delivery. I practiced singing the vocal line alone to anticipate where to place the oboe interjections so as not to intrude on the natural poetic rhythm.

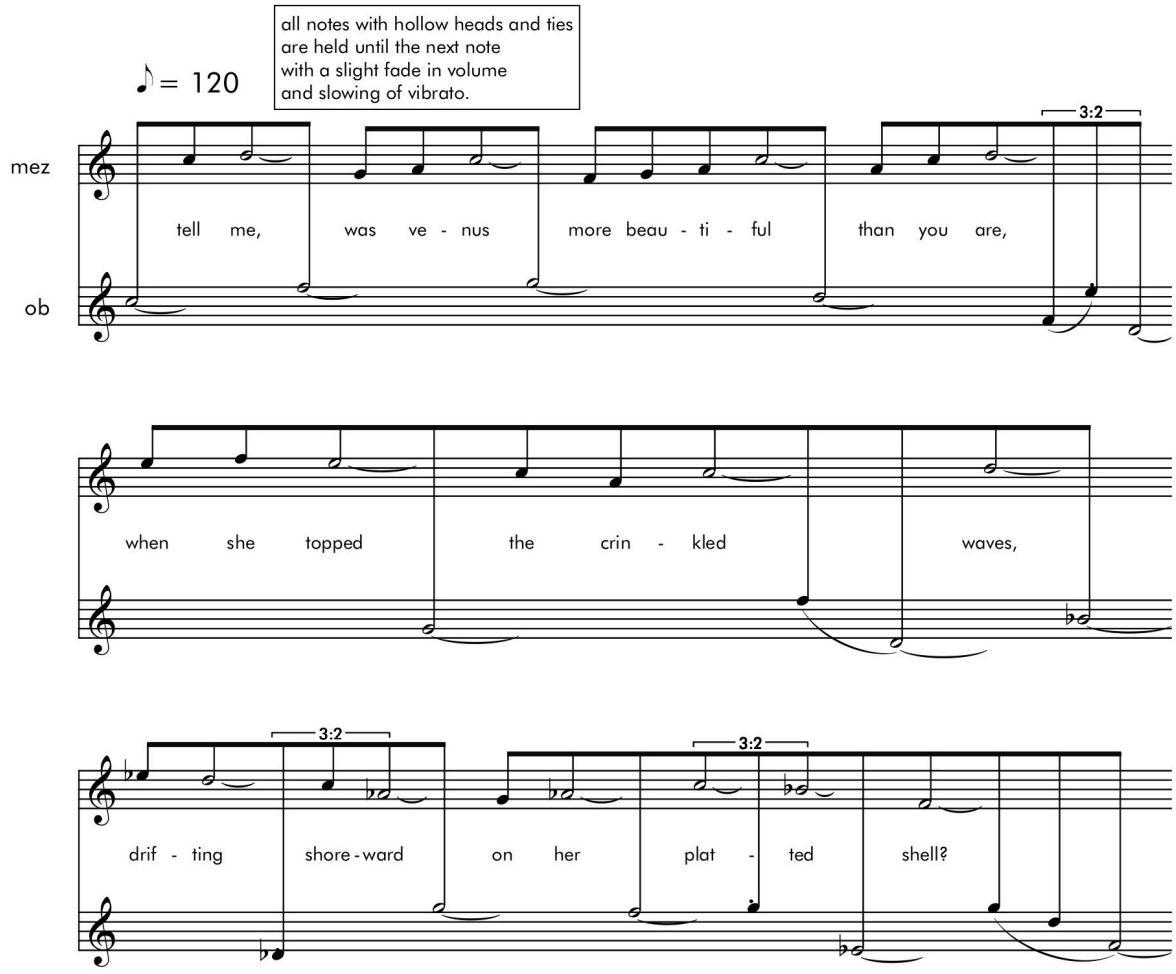

Figure 2.2 - "tell me" pg. 1

“you stand between…”

“Wheat-in-the-Ear “

You stand between the cedars and the green spruces
Brilliantly naked.
And I think:
What are you,
A gem under sunlight?
A poised spear?
A jade cup?
You flash in front of the cedars and the tall spruces,
And I see that you are fire—
Sacrificial fire on a jade alter,
Spear-tongue of white, ceremonial fire.
My eyes burn,
My hands are flames seeking you,
But you are as remote from me as a bright pointed planet
Set in the distance of an evening sky.[201]

In “you stand between…” McMasters tasks the two performers with swapping their usual positions as vocalist and instrumentalist. In doing so, he both challenges conceptions of soloist/accompanist roles and provides an unconventional connection between the instrumental and vocal.

In our interview, McMasters’s said that by asking the oboist to deliver the text in this movement, he wanted to “demonstrate the humanity of the instrumentalist” by letting a typically hidden aspect of his or her personality come through on stage. The oboist has the chance to express emotions through words and cannot hide behind the instrument. The mezzo-soprano here, still uses her voice, but as support and accompaniment, emphasizing particular vowels and consonants in the text. The effect underscores the raw, yearning power of Lowell’s words.

[201] Lowell, 50.

While in “tell me” I practiced singing the poetry to contextualize the pacing of the oboe part, rehearsing “you stand between…” honed an awareness of how my recitation of the words affects the accompanist’s ability to follow me. My pacing needed to be slow enough for Beattie’s sung pitches and articulative consonants to speak, yet fast enough to maintain the energy and character of the poem. My diction served as the main cues for unison attacks and releases, so I had to over exaggerate my pronunciation, while also embodying the character and affect of the words themselves.

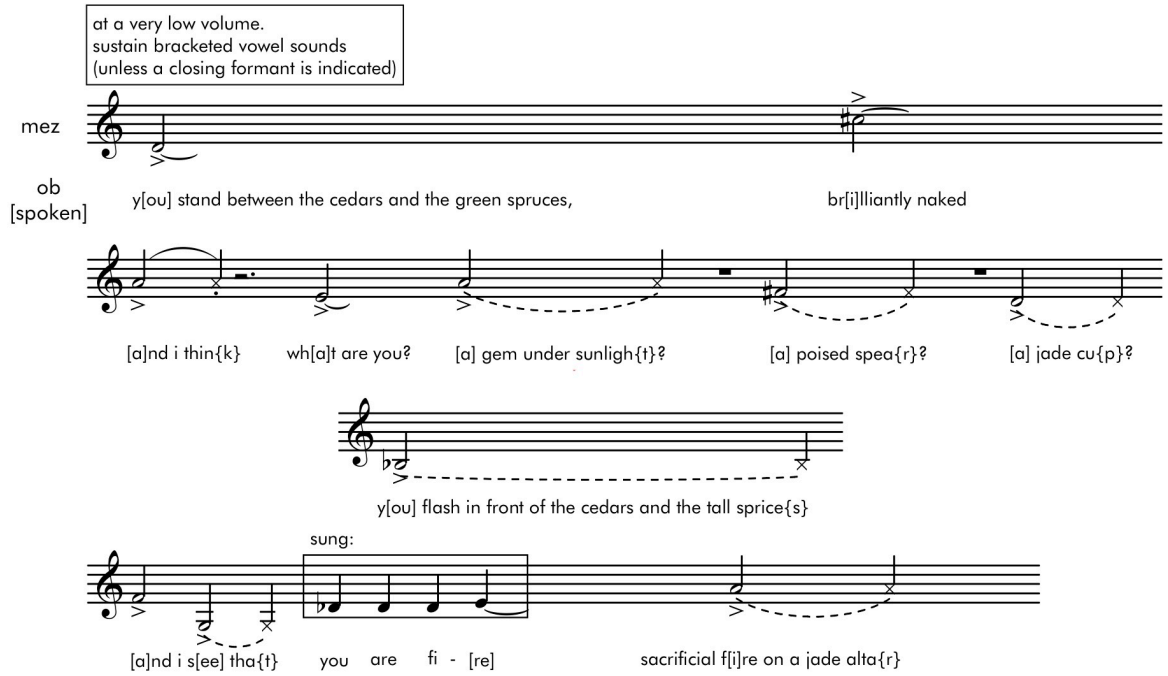

Figure 2.3 - "you stand between" pg. 1

Learning *You Are Fire* deepened my collaborative listening skills. Working with a singer and developing my own identity as a vocalist gave me a new frame to consider articulation and punctation. McMasters’s setting of Lowell’s poetry also helped me glean rhythmic and metric information from text rather than notated meter. This piece and the collaborative development involved in putting it together has certainly made me a better musician.

Endless Wonders by Kerrith Livengood

Endless Wonders is a short duo piece for English horn and mezzo-soprano. Kerrith Livengood composed this piece for So Much Hot Air (Zachary Pulse and Jennifer Beattie) in November 2016, setting a poem of the same name by Jennifer L. Knox. As with McMasters, Beattie and I decided to commission Livengood based on our previous experiences performing her music. *Endless Wonders* was premiered at the Hopper in Los Angeles in November 2016 and has since been arranged for oboe and countertenor. In my analysis, I will highlight the extended techniques Livengood incorporated for the English horn—including multiphonics, breath sounds, timbral shadings, "helicopter" bocal articulation, and singing into the instrument—and how these techniques fortify the language of Jennifer L. Knox.

Kerrith Livengood

Kerrith Livengood's works have been performed at KISS 2018, ACO's SONiC Festival, June in Buffalo, Bargemusic, CCM's MusicX festivals, the North American Saxophone Alliance annual conference, the Edmonton New Music Festival, the Contemporary Undercurrent of Song series, the Cortona Sessions, and Alia Musica Pittsburgh's Conductors Festival. She has composed works for the JACK Quartet, Third Angle Ensemble, Duo Cortona, Altered Sound Duo, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Beattie and pianist Adam Marks, soprano Amy Petrongelli, Harry Partch's Adapted Guitar I performed by Charles Corey, and the h2 Quartet. Her works feature unexpected musical forms, complex grooves, lyricism, noise, and humor. Her string quartet *This Is My Scary Robot Voice*, performed by the Argus Quartet, features speech rhythms intoning an anxious inner monologue, which the New York Times described as "sketchy seeming." Kerrith's set of *Four Jennifer L. Knox Songs* including "Hot Ass Poem" for mezzo-soprano, flute, and piano features shouting, theatrical ogling, and pretty bird-like flute chirps. Currently, she is collaborating with poet Jennifer L. Knox on a dramatic work centered on dialogues by starlings (the invasive and adaptive birds). Kerrith has been a composer-in-residence at Artists at Albatross Reach, the Osage Arts Community, and Copland House. She is also a flutist, drummer, and improviser. As a flutist, she was a performer and co-founder of Alia Musica Pittsburgh, and has premiered many new works by young composers with members of the JACK Quartet, Eighth Blackbird, and the American Modern Ensemble. Kerrith is an experimental improviser who has performed bird songs while sitting in a tree, worn a towel as concert attire, and performed in concert with Anthony Braxton and Renee Baker. Kerrith sometimes collaborates with her son Talan, and their combined works have been performed by the group How Things Are Made (Brian Riordan and others) and the duo So Much Hot Air (Jennifer Beattie and Zach Pulse). She is a native of Springfield, Missouri; graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, where she studied with Eric Moe, Mathew Rosenblum, Amy Williams and Marcos Balter; and currently teaches at the

University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign). Kerrith is also Assistant Director of the New Music On The Point Festival, an annual summer festival for young composers and performers. She is also inaugural composer-in-residence and one of the co-founders, along with director Clare Longendyke, of the Music in Bloom Festival in Bloomington, Indiana.[202]

Jennifer L. Knox

If Amy Lowell's verses can be described with words like "cool, controlled, and shining beauty," Jennifer L. Knox might be her mirror opposite. Knox writes madcap, over-the-top, profane, raw, pop-culture-filled poetry.

Knox is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Iowa State University. Her books of poetry include *A Gringo Like Me, Drunk by Noon, The Mystery of the Hidden Driveway, Days of Shame and Failure,* and *Crushing It*. She is published in other online magazines, journals, and anthologies. This personal statement on Iowa State English Department's website highlights Knox's relationship to her readers.

> "To support my poetry habit, I have worked in communications for over twenty years—from concept development to writing to graphic design. My areas of expertise include education, human resources, healthcare, non-profit, education, retail, events, and food ingredients. My professional experience has shown me the importance of placing the reader's needs and expectations first. This skill has deeply enriched my creative writing as well as my teaching."[203]

As one of those readers, I am really struck by Knox's expansive vocabulary and non-concordant syntax, which is seemingly informed by her work in a variety of sectors. She pairs words together in ways that I couldn't dream of conjuring. Her language is dark, absurdist, hilarious, and wonderful. "Endless Wonders" is a striking example of Knox's sense of the macabre.

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[202] http://www.kerrithlivengood.com/about.html.
[203] Iowa State University Department of English, "Jennifer Knox," https://engl.iastate.edu/directory/jennifer-knox/.

Poetry

Endless Wonders by Jennifer L. Knox

Today my hand is glad.
Thunderheads, like Zambonis,
scour the barren prairie, but it's
not really nothing. There's lichen
and time and the spore-fat shadow
of death. I am red and smiling in ice
for a minute, thanks to a pill. Best
practices: I try and try and try till I
climb out backwards! I yrt till it hurts.
Neighbors' crutches, stacked best
for burning. Air swooshes up
through the fire, and from it, moths
emerge. Their white wings shaggy
like a bleached football blanket.
I'll cover the winter window with it.
Thank you. Shave and shave it off.
Musk from an old faithful gland keeps
the candles roaring till they woof.
When will the lighting end?[204]

[204] https://toadthejournal.com/issue-62/jennifer-knox/#1.

Composer Perspectives

My interview with Livengood provided some insight into her process writing *Endless Wonders* as well as her compositional process more broadly. *Endless Wonders,* like much of her other music, came about through a long-standing working relationship between Knox and Livengood. According to Livengood, the two first met through a mutual friend around ten years ago. Livengood has since set several of Knox's poems to music, including "Popular Music After the Apocalypse," "Fat Shaming Polka," and "Hot Ass Poem." Livengood feels that Knox's poetry is particularly well suited to music because of its diversity of subject matter and form from one poem to the next. The variety stimulates Livengood's creative impulses and ensures each poem's setting will sound unique.

When setting out to write a piece for So Much Hot Air, Livengood says she knew Knox's poetry would be ideal for us. She reached out to Knox, who responded with an unpublished poem she had recently finished called "Endless Wonders." Livengood showed the poem to Beattie who thought it would make an excellent piece.

Knox's dark themes of expansive nature, death, and decay in "Endless Wonders" inspired Livengood to write something "creepy, free, and not too complicated," and allow Knox's text to speak for itself. To achieve this, Livengood's initial goal was to "create lots of space" to mirror the "bleak prairie landscapes" illustrated in the text. She set the intention of sticking with her first ideas and intuition, composing line by line and not concerning herself with form. Even though she composed music around the text in a process similar to McMasters, the technical components of *Endless Wonders* present a different set of challenges. Livengood's own words in

our interview reflect my feelings about her music. “I assume what I write will be harder than I think it is.”[205]

Performer Perspectives

One of my favorite parts of the collaborative process is exploring extended techniques with composers. This work allows me to teach composers what I know about the oboe and gives me a chance to try new techniques at the suggestion of a composer that I might not have experimented with on my own. Working with Livengood honed my skill in developing music with a wide range of extended techniques. Some of the techniques Livengood asked for worked really well, and some felt less idiomatic and warranted modification to achieve more equal balance between the voices; yet in both cases I learned from the process of exploring them together in this piece.

In an early conversation with the composer, she asked me if I could articulate rapidly on an English horn bocal to produce the “helicopter” effect that bassoonists can do. I initially doubted the effectiveness of this technique, but when I tried it, it worked surprisingly well. This sound ultimately formed the basis for the English horn part in *Endless Wonders*, symbolizing the thunderheads scouring the barren prairie landscape.

[205] Kerrith Livengood, phone interview by author, September 16, 2019.

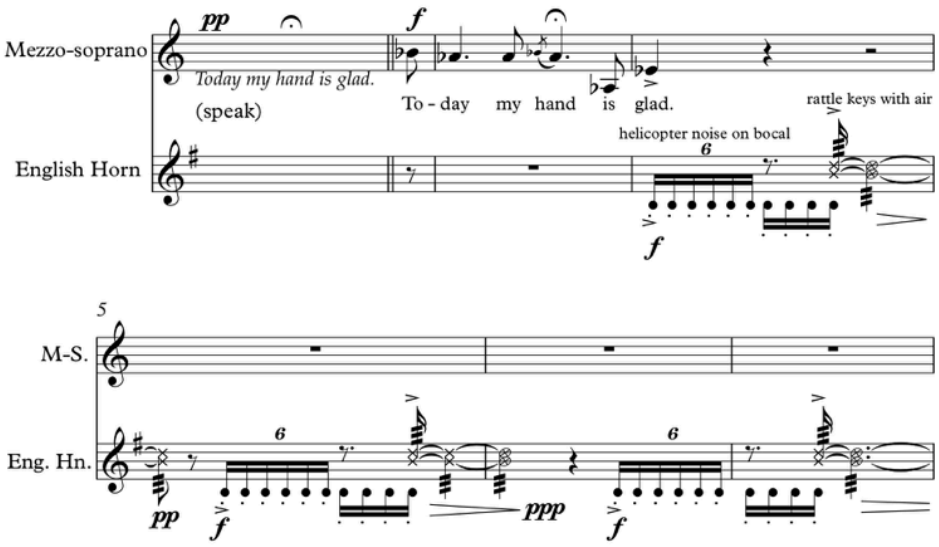

Figure 2.4 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 1-7

Another extended technique Livengood uses frequently and with success, both in this piece and the next one I will analyze, is exaggerating the instability of quiet dynamics, allowing a note marked *ppp* to cut in and out. She often uses this effect to transition from a section without pitched material ("helicopter" articulation) to a section with fully pitched sounds.

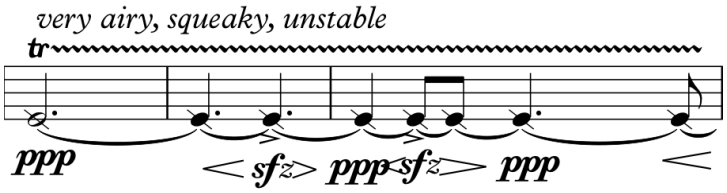

Figure 2.5 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 16-18

Some of Livengood's suggested extended techniques, however, were initially less effective, causing issues of balance between the English horn and mezzo-soprano part. Livengood's background as flutist clearly influences her approach to woodwind extended techniques. Even though the oboe and flute have many similar qualities and associations—nearly all 18th century hautboy players were flute players too, like Quantz—the instruments are starkly

different when it comes to extended techniques. Many of the extended techniques Livengood initially wrote into the oboe part were informed by her practice as a flutist. For example, in mm. 19-21, she asks the English horn player to sing and play the same pitch.

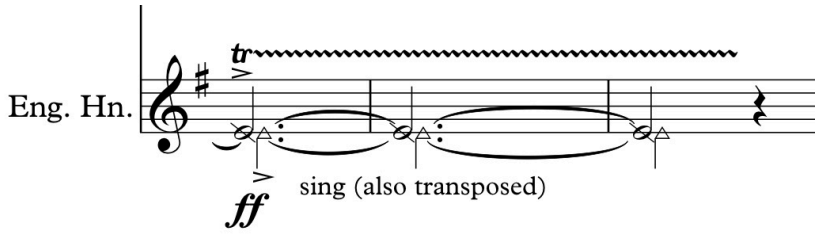

Figure 2.6 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 19-21

Singing and playing simultaneously is indeed possible on the English horn, but it has far less effectiveness than it does on the flute. Nora Post explains the reasons why this is.

> A greater aperture allows for significantly more volume in the singing, thus creating a better balance between the singing and the playing, and better control in general. This explains why singing and playing is so successful on instruments such as the bassoon, bass clarinet and tenor saxophone. However, as long as the larynx vibrates, all instruments will produce the same acoustical phenomenon. It is only the balance and dynamic level of singing and playing which vary according to the instrument used. The controllable dynamic range for the oboe is mf or louder. The singing itself can never be loud, since the mouth is shut, and the dynamic level of the singing is consequently only that of humming.[206]

In performance, the English hornist's singing is hardly audible in mm. 19-21 because of the *ff* dynamic, but it does add a brash color to the sound. Livengood asks for singing and playing in m. 32 as well, but in this case, brings the dynamic of the English horn down and separates the range between the singing and playing to allow the sung glissando to be heard.

[206] Post, 176.

Figure 2.7 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 28-33

Livengood incorporates multiphonics and overblown sounds in the English horn to great effect, though sometimes at the expense of over balancing the voice. Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8 illustrate this balance concern.

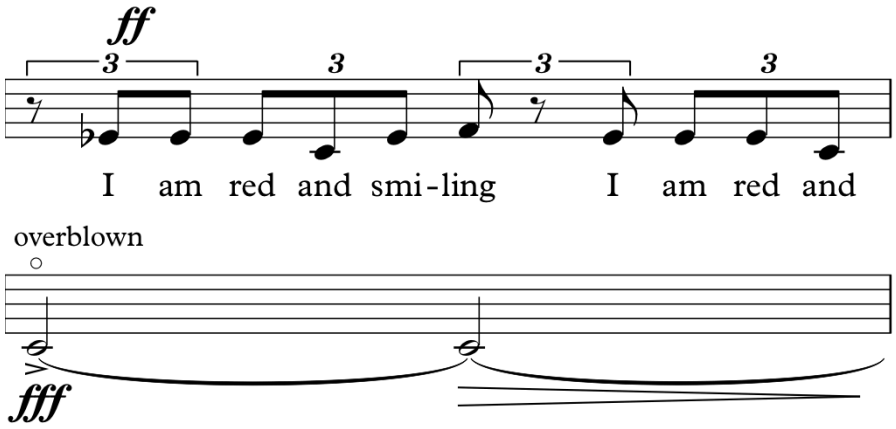

Figure 2.8 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 25

Another extended technique Livengood asks for that needed modification comes in m. 42. Here, she notates an air sound blown through the instrument, paralleling the swooshing air up

through the fire, crescendoing from *pp* to *f.* Because I am playing in mm. 40-41 and then again in m. 45. I do not have time to take the reed off the bocal. While a flutist can create a full dynamic range by blowing through the instrument without pitch, oboe reeds are designed to vibrate with minimal air pressure behind them. Therefore, it's nearly impossible to play such a dramatic crescendo of air without generating vibrations in the reed.

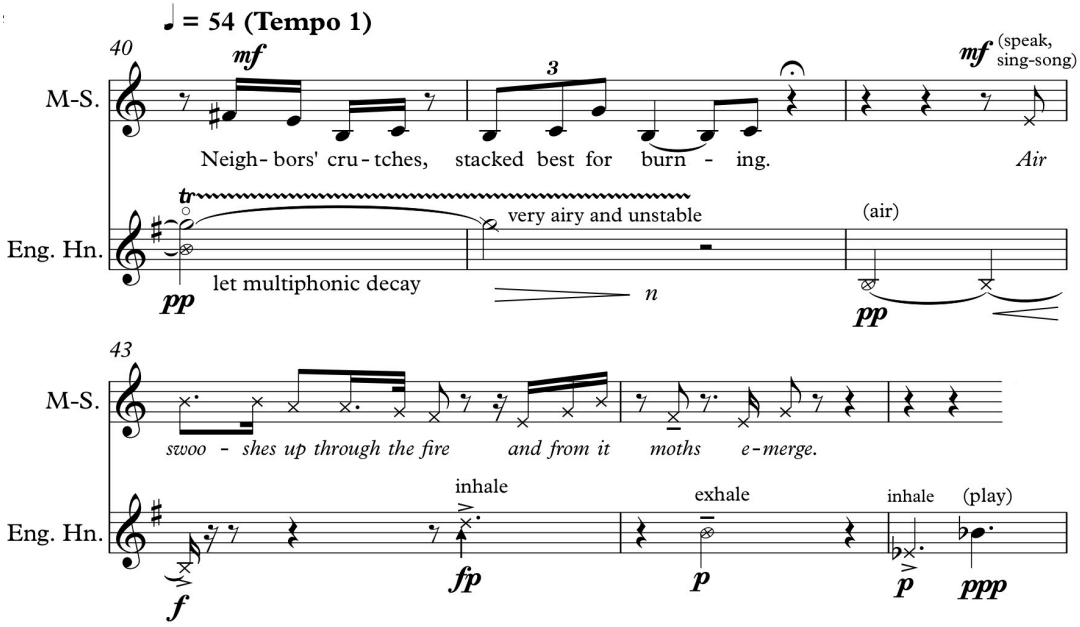

Figure 2.9 - *Endless Wonders* mm. 40-45

Beattie and I ultimately decided that a microphone could correct all of these balance issues while preserving the integrity of Livengood's sound world. I could easily make the full, notated crescendo from m. 42 to m. 43 with proper mic technique and Beattie could project her words in m. 31 and m. 25 over my overblown low notes. The "helicopter" effect and articulated breath sounds in mm. 43-45 also benefit from enhanced projection. Following Livengood's intention for this piece gave me a framework to overcome my instrument's limitations and highlight its strengths, while teaching me that un-idiomatic extended techniques are still worth exploring.

***Bup Bup Neemana* by Kerrith Livengood**

Similar to *Endless Wonders*, Livengood explores the means by which articulation and timbre communicate meaning in *Bup Bup Neemana*. In this trio for oboe and two sopranos, however, Livengood does not use words, but rather the "text" is constructed of entirely non-linguistic sounds. I commissioned and premiered this piece with sopranos Amy Petrongelli and Alexandra Porter in May 2017 in Princeton, NJ on the concert series, Contemporary Undercurrent of Song Project. Porter founded CUSP in 2015 in order to create a space to perform new music in Princeton, NJ for communities outside of the university. "I wanted to see the kind of concerts in Princeton that I was seeing in New York City." Another primary goal of the concert series is to re-define the genre of "art song" to include more forms of vocal music beyond the traditional model of voice and piano. I will analyze how Livengood challenges the traditional model of art song.

Composer Perspectives

Bup Bup Neemana, indeed, challenges the conventions of traditional art song in both instrumentation and concept. Grove Music Online defines art song as "a short vocal piece of serious artistic purpose."[207] In the 18th century, the term implied a secular solo song with an independent keyboard accompaniment, which is largely the same association "art song" holds for modern audiences. Livengood has composed music for voice and piano, but the instrumentation of most of her vocal music defies these norms. She has written music for ensembles including double bass and soprano, violin and mezzo-soprano, cello and soprano, singing violist, and

[207] Grove, "Art song."

English horn and mezzo-soprano (as I explored in the previous example), so she was well suited to meet the artistic goals of CUSP.

Livengood's concept for *Bup Bup Neemana* challenges the notions of traditional art song as well. Instead of centering the voice(s) above an instrumental accompaniment, she features the oboe most prominently in this piece and the voices largely follow and imitate. When first describing the piece to me—before I'd seen the first draft of the score—Livengood portrayed it as "the Yip Yip Martians from Sesame Street discovering an oboe." In lieu of using text in this piece, Livengood wanted to focus on register, authority, and imitation.

Bup Bup Neemana has a light-hearted spirit. The sound world is filled with nonsense syllables; rhythmic clapping, snapping, and breathing; and dense, contrapuntal textures. Though Livengood wrote in her program notes that the performers should "enjoy each other's sounds and company," she also stressed that the piece comments on how "women learn to lower their speaking voices to sound more authoritative." Livengood's previously referenced notion that her music is harder for performers than she thinks it is certainly applies to *Bup Bup Neemana* as well.[208]

Performer Perspectives

I will include perspectives from each of the three performers in this section, supported with examples from the score. Our discussions of this piece centered on three primary themes: ensemble coordination and balance, diction and stamina, and extended techniques.

Learning our individual parts and then rehearsing *Bup Bup Neemana* together was challenging. Though the rhythms are complex, they lie in a tight groove, so it's easy to stay together once the groove is established, but it took a great deal of individual work to arrive at

[208] Kerrith Livengood, phone interview by author, September 16, 2019.

that point. Ultimately, it felt very rewarding to assemble all three parts. Porter claims the rhythmic demands in this piece can "teach singers how to think like instrumentalists," a point I would not argue. Singers, usually the soloists of art song, tend to take greater liberties with rhythm than their instrumental accompaniment. When accompanied by piano, singers are less likely to know the full score, understanding (maybe not always explicitly) that the pianist will follow them. The equal balance of roles in *Bup Bup Neemana*, however, demands strict metronomic precision—as well as a total knowledge of all parts of the score—to achieve its flow.

Livengood sets this groove at the beginning of the piece, asking the singers to clap and rub their hands together in 32nd-note subdivisions while interjecting with short, punctuated syllables like "hih" and "hah" on off beats, mirrored by bursts of the air through the oboe without a reed. Petrongelli claims reading this notation was like learning a new language.

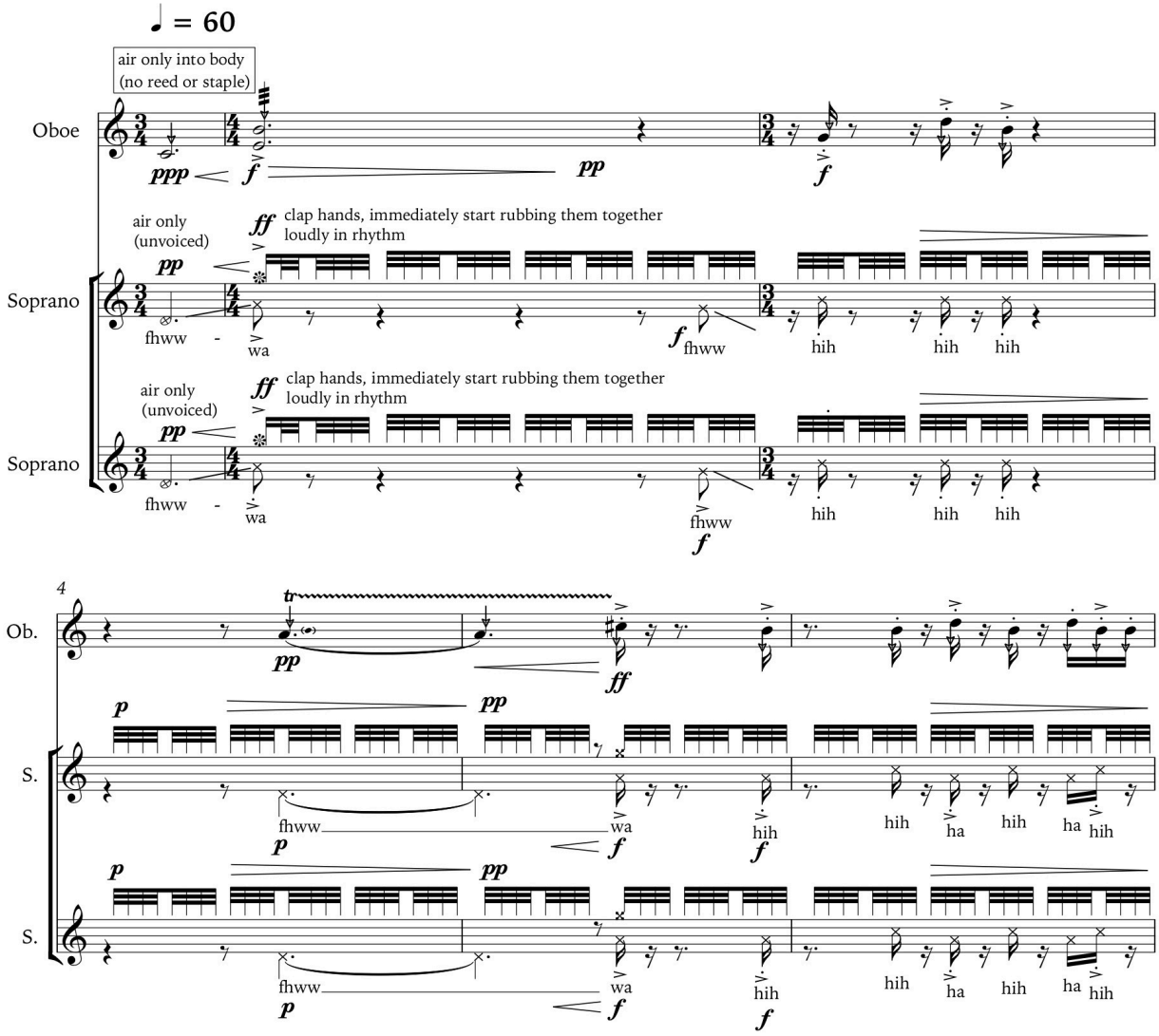

Figure 2.10 - *Bup Bup Neemana* mm. 1-6

From a volume standpoint, we did not have to work as hard to balance the three parts. Livengood allows the oboist to lead the singers as a way to highlight issues of register and authority, but she hardly notates the oboe at full volume, so there is minimal risk of overpowering the voices. Her writing clearly differentiates between moments of sonic separation and moments of imitation. Figure 2.11 shows an excellent example of the singers imitating the oboe as the Yip Yip Martians would.

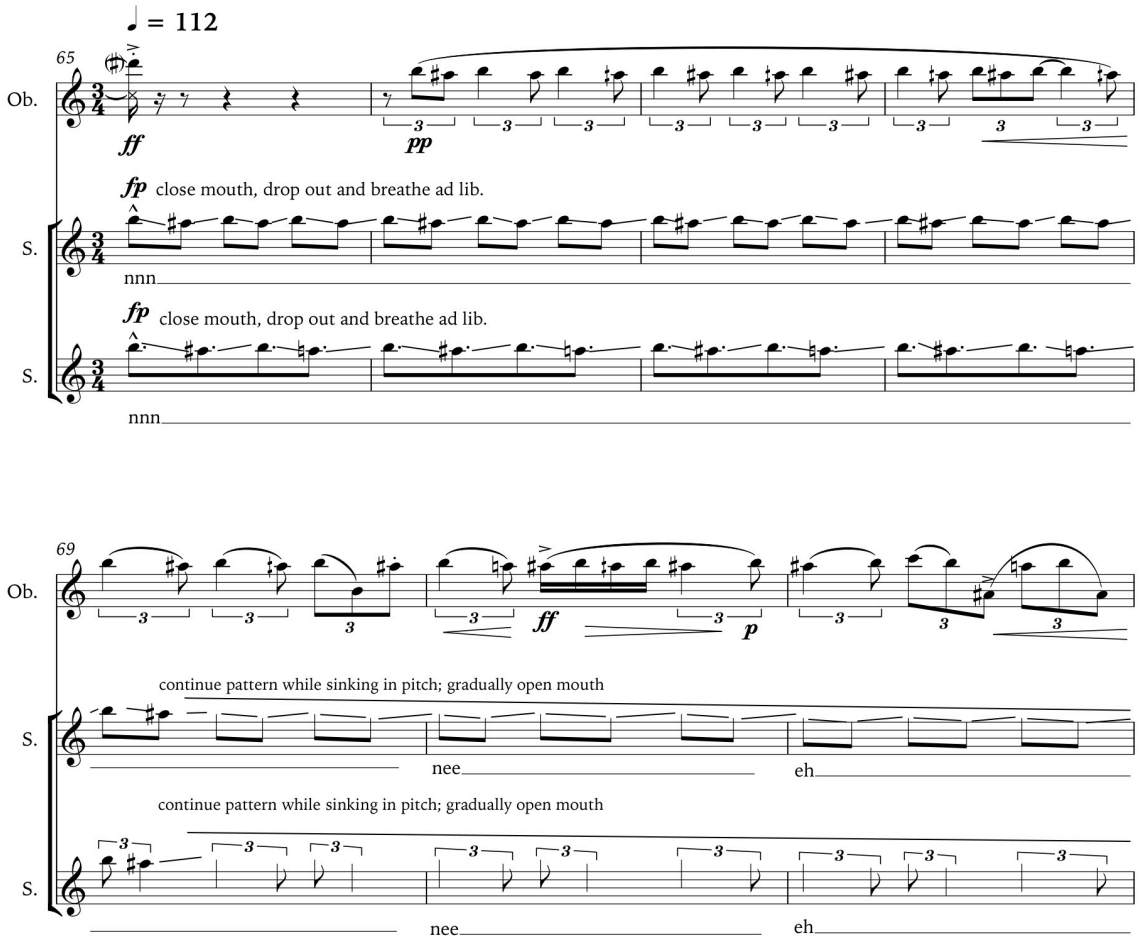

Figure 2.11 - *Bup Bup Neemana* mm. 65-71

The idea of an instrument dominating a piece of chamber music with voices challenges both the 18th century ideals about the roles of instrumentalists and singers as well as the rules of text setting in vocal melodies. Historically, instrumental practices have been thought of as imitative of vocal practices. Throughout *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister,* Mattheson stresses that instrumentalists should play a subservient role to vocalists, taking care never to "predominate."[209] He also cautions against composing vocal melodies without careful consideration of rhetoric. In a section entitled "The Sound of Words," Mattheson states:

[209] Mattheson, 424.

> [It is a] common and great error of most composers…easily [to] become enraptured with the quality of words; dally excessively with their mere sound; employ forced untimely imitations on them, and bring in things he knows nothing of, has no part in, indeed, which often run precisely contrary to it. What we therefore learn here is that we imitate the non-sensical.[210]

Of course, in this context Mattheson was addressing problems of excessive text painting in 18th century music with language. However, what he warns against in exactly what Livengood does to great effect, in my opinion, with this piece. Her instruction for the performers to "enjoy each other's sounds and company" might indeed strike Mattheson as "excessive dallying."

My conversations with Porter and Petrongelli also included a discussion about the linguistic challenges of this piece. Livengood's notated non-sensical language made intuitive sense for both singers. They felt that Livengood carefully chose sounds based on their semantic quality, allowing some syllables to move quickly across the tongue (Soprano 1, m. 87 "ra pup pup pup ne ma na") and others to slide between pitches and fall out of time (Soprano 2, m. 89 "boy oy oy oy oing"). Overall, Livengood's consistency in the syllabic writing made it easier for the singers to understand her intentions.

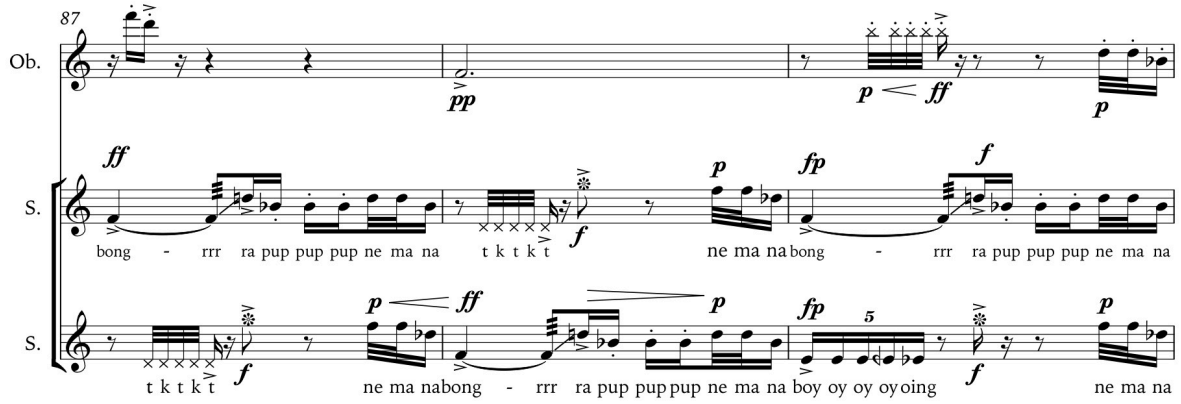

Figure 2.12 - *Bup Bup Neemana* mm. 87-89

[210] Mattheson, 413.

Both the complexities of rhythm and articulation in *Bup Bup Neemana* require a lot of mental stamina to execute. The score lies across thirteen pages, even though the piece is less than five minutes long. The density of the textures and the rapid changes from one section to the next demands an intense focus for all three performers. Petrongelli describes the form of *Bup Bup Neemana* as "cellular," made up of smaller sections that one had to memorize like a "difficult knitting pattern." An awareness of the piece as a whole and its progression is crucial to avoid getting behind. "If you turn the page without knowing what comes next, it's already too late."

Beyond the mental stamina, *Bup Bup Neemana* also requires a technical stamina from all three of its performers. As Porter describes, the short, punctuated syllables (Figure 2.13) require a lot of air to move through them. In *bel canto* singing, the singer's goal is to sustain the vowels with as much connection as possible, using consonants only as articulation to separate the vowels. Most of Livengood's vocal writing in this piece, by contrast, employs heavy consonants over quick bursts of sound. Singing "ha ha ha ha" and "he he he he" like in mm. 21-23 below takes a different kind of stamina than most singers are used to.

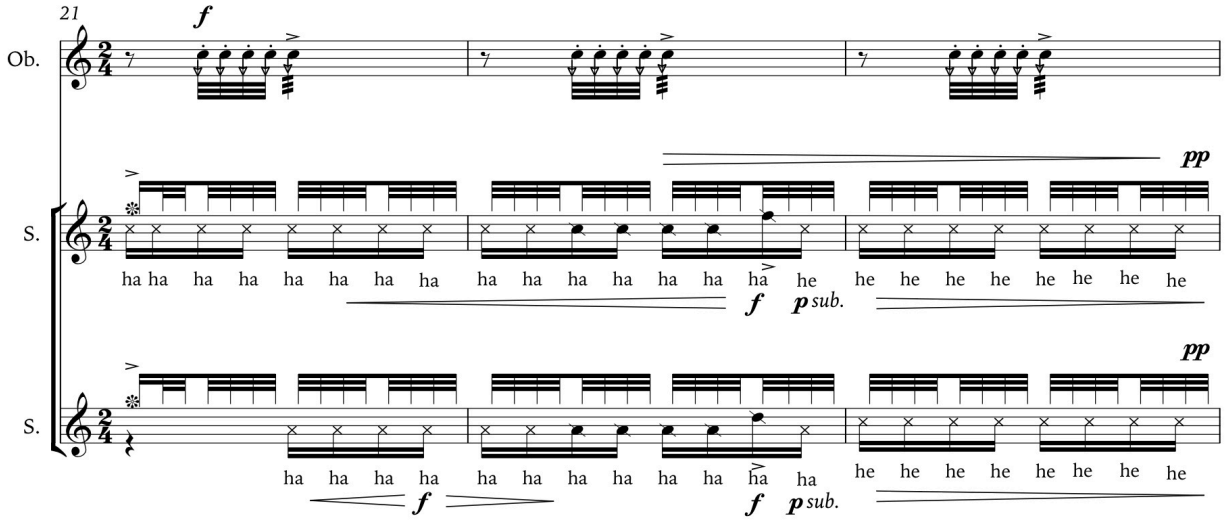

Figure 2.13 - *Bup Bup Neemana* mm. 21-23

Livengood's oboe writing, similar to *Endless Wonders,* explores the gray area between air and tone. The first 28 bars of the score instruct the oboist to blow through the instrument without a reed. The following section (Figure 2.14) slowly incorporates shadings of pitch through a steady rise in volume, leading to the first fully sounded tone in m. 46.

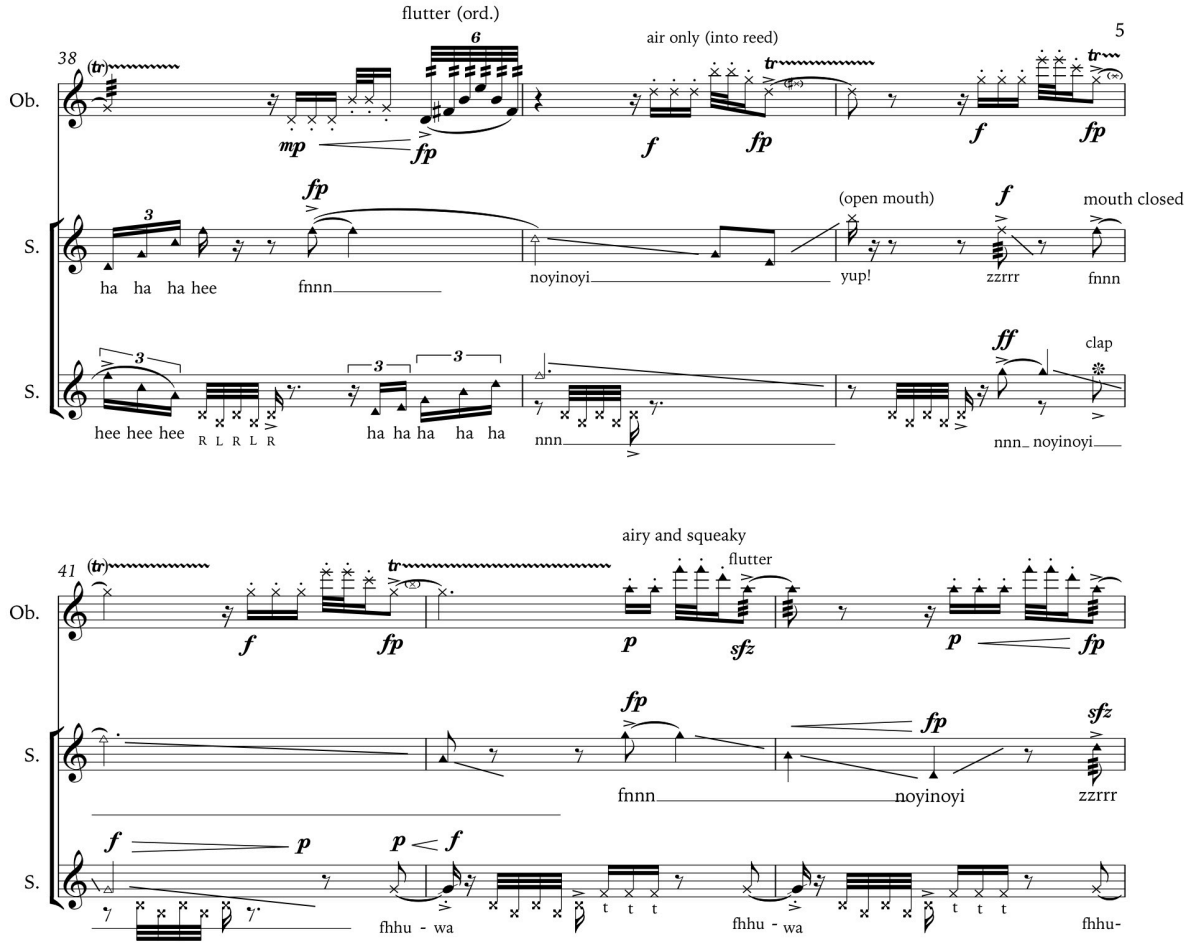

Figure 2.14 - *Bup Bup Neemana* mm. 38-43

As I discussed previously, blowing air through reed without getting a sound is difficult, and not possible in loud dynamics—I don't make my reeds that way! For example, the dynamic distinctions between m. 41 and m. 42 in the oboe part cannot be so clearly defined. By incorporating this half-pitch-half-air technique, Livengood ensures that the subtleties of language and timbre in the vocal parts can project through the texture.

Learning *Bup Bup Neemana* taught the singers to think like instrumentalists and develop a mental and physical stamina not usually required of them in art song. Playing Livengood's music has shown me different ways the oboe can be effective when paired with the voice, especially in airy, soft playing. The unvoiced and underblown sections of this piece make the moments where the singers and oboist come together with a fullness of tone even more powerful.

Ay Adamha by Nima Hamidi

Ay Adamha is another trio for two sopranos and oboe, commissioned by Poor Puppet (Porter, Pulse, and Petrongelli) for the Contemporary Undercurrent of Song Project in April 2017. The composer, Nima Hamidi, set the words of the great Persian poet, Nima Yushij. Many of the challenges in this work came from the transliteration process of trying to notate the Farsi text of the poem with IPA symbols. In my analysis of the piece, I will explore how Hamidi's process of transliteration, both linguistic and musical, led to a unique soundscape for this instrumentation.

Nima Hamidi

Nima Hamidi (b.1984) is an Iranian composer, improviser and music scholar. His music is the sonic representation of a visual imagination, integrating music perception and computation featuring unstable timbral spectra. Influenced by a diverse musical background that includes Iranian traditional music, his compositions are a temporal study of sound that conceptualizes a cultural auditory experience.

Nima's music has been performed internationally by such ensembles as JACK Quartet, the Center for New Music (University of Iowa), Sorāyesh Ensemble, and resident performers of New Music on the Point. His music was performed and awarded at the International Fadjr Music Festival, Roudaki Hall, SCI regional conference (Friends University), Iowa composers' forum, and number of symposia and workshops.

In addition to writing concert music, Nima collaborates with playwrights, dancers, and filmmakers. For the past three years he has been working as a concert organizer promoting new music, serving as the president of University of Iowa SCI student chapter, a research assistant for both the Composers' Workshop and the Center for New Music (University of Iowa), and the founder of two experimental/improvisatory ensembles, Comprovisors and TetraXord.

Nima recieved his PhD in music composition at the University of Iowa. Prior to Iowa he earned his MA in composition and BSc in Civil Engineering in his home country. He has studied composition with Josh Levine, David Gompper, Lawrence Fritts, Shaheen Farhat, Kambiz Roshanravan and Kiawasch Sahebnasagh. He also has participated in master classes with David Lang, Wolfgang von Schweinitz, Stephen David Beck, Hans Thomalla, Anthony Cheung, Augusta Read Thomas, Amy Williams, Robert Morris, Juraj Kojs, Marcos Balter, Laura Kaminsky, and Michael Fiday.[211]

[211] http://www.nimahamidi.com/bio.php.

Program Notes

"Whilst this piece is a contemporary interpretation of Iranian traditional music, it is an attempt to discover non-narrative temporality structures [and integrate] distorted conventional musical elements. Influenced by Persian performance, textures are constructed in a heterophonic fashion. Indeed, this piece is a solo improvisation written for the ensemble. Meanwhile, *Ay Adamha* is referring to humanity and its ignorance toward social morality."

Nima Yushij

Nima Yushij (1897-1960) is considered by many to be the father of modern Persian poetry. His career began to blossom around a time of great social upheaval in Iran. At the onset of WWII, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate the throne by the invading British. With this liberation came increasing Western influence on Iranian society and culture.[212] Yushij's poetry followed this modernizing trend. Before him, poetic forms and subjects had hardly changed in centuries since the great masters—Omar Khayyam, Rumi, and Hafez. R. Victoria Arana says this jump from medieval to modern in the span of one generation would be analogous to Western literature moving from "Alexander Pope to e. e. cummings in fifty years' time."[213]

Nima's new poetry broke rules of form as well as content. His poems contained lines of unequal length and irregular or non-existing rhyme schemes. "In the she'r-i now (new poetry) rhythm takes the center stage, [determined by] natural speech rather than according to a set of predetermined meters (awzan)."[214] The *awzan*, derived from the Arabic word for "weight," had dictated for centuries that poems should be balanced from left to right, with every word and pattern appearing in perfect symmetry. Yushij broke these conventions, choosing instead to

[212] Iraj Bashiri, "Nima Yushij and New Persian Poetry."
[213] R. Victoria Arana, *The Facts on File Companion to World Poetry: 1900 to the Present*, 212.
[214] Bashiri, "Nima Yushij and New Persian Poetry."

allow "the length of the line to be determined by the depth of the thought being expressed rather than by the conventional Arabic meters that had dictated the length…since the early days of Persian poetry."[215] Yushij also broke traditions of poetic antiquity by expressing realistic depictions of human emotion and social relevance in the modern world emotionally and aesthetically in poetry. The poem "Ay Adamha" illustrates this shift in subject matter.

"Ay Adamha" was published in 1941, an eventful year in Iranian history. Its publication coincided with the overthrow of Reza Shah Pahlavi by British forces on the eve of WWII. This opening up of the country to the West encouraged newfound participation of intellectual thought in Iranian public discourse. Iranian culture for hundreds of years had relied on the antiquity of ancient Persian civilization, but revolutionaries like Yushij felt like Iran needed to move forward with the rest of the world. *Ay Adamha* exemplifies the revolutionary spirit of Iran during this time.[216]

[215] Bashiri, "Nima Yushij and New Persian Poetry."
[216] Ibid.

Poetry

"Ay Adamha" ("Hey Humans")

Hey humans,
Who are sitting on the shore, joyous and laughing,
Someone is losing his life in the water,
Someone is constantly struggling
In this raging, dark and heavy sea that you know.
When you are drunk
With the thought of overcoming your enemy,
When you think in vain
That you have given a hand to a feeble person
To dispel suffering,
When you tighten your belts
Over your waists…

When can I tell you
That someone is sacrificing his life in the water pointlessly?

Hey humans,
Who sit around a sumptuous feast on the shore,
Bread on your spread, clothes covering your bodies,
A drowning man calls you.
He beats the heavy wave with his tired hand,
His mouth is dragged shut with eyes torn by terror,
He has seen your shadows from afar,
Has swallows the water in the azure hole as his impatience grows every moment,
Sometimes he raises his head, sometimes his foot, out of the water.

Hey humans,
He takes the measure of this old world again from afar,
He shouts and hopes for help.
Hey humans,
Who are watching indifferently from the shore,
The wave pounds the silent shore,
It spreads like a drunk man on the bed, gripped by unconsciousness.
It recedes, and the voice rises roaring from afar again:
Hey humans...
And the sound of the wind grows more desolate by the moment
And in the wind, his voice grows freer.
From the near and far waters
Still this voice penetrates the ears
Hey humans...[217]

[217] Mahmoud Khoshchereh, "The Structure of Authoring in Nima Yushij's Poetry: a Bakhtinian Reading," 232.

Composer Perspectives

Fittingly, Nima Yushij is Nima Hamidi's namesake. In our interview, he told me that his father named him after the revolutionary poet because he believed in the power of literature to express the truths of science. Of all Yushij's poems, Hamidi feels the text of "Ay Adamha" is particularly relevant in a timeless way. Yushij's insistent call to action, demonstrated by the speaker's repeated interruptions ("Hey humans!"), feels pertinent and lends itself well to a musical setting. The main themes of my conversation with Hamidi were about transliteration (both linguistic and musical), timbre, and time.

The biggest challenge in Hamidi's mind was communicating Yushij's language to non-native speakers. Translating Farsi into English is further complicated by the different alphabet systems each language uses, which necessitated that Hamidi transliterate the text into a mutually understood alphabet system. Hamidi chose to notate Yushij's text in IPA, knowing that most Western classical singers are familiar with its characters. Yet, this isn't a perfect solution.

IPA is used primarily as a reference point to understanding pronunciation differences between languages; rarely do singers read IPA on scores. Most languages spoken in countries and regions that have produced and perpetuated Western classical music traditions use the Latin alphabet. While a native English speaker learning to sing in French with no prior knowledge of the language presents its own challenges, the alphabet is at least intelligible. Thus, transliteration is not a common process in learning vocal music within this tradition.

The term "transliteration" can apply to music in the same way as language. Nima's compositional practices are also rooted in a Persian classical tradition that is not notated with the Western system of note heads on a staff. Hamidi was trying to transcribe an unwritten musical style in a western notation to capture the essence of Persian classical music. The process of

transliterating language and musical style is one of Hamidi's core compositional practices. New music, to him, is about "defining a new technique, using it, describing it, and notating it."[218]

The first phrase sung by Soprano 1 shows the IPA text for "Hey humans who are sitting on the shore, joyous and laughing" as well as a musical technique of shifting the resonance of the voice on a sustained pitch (more on this later).

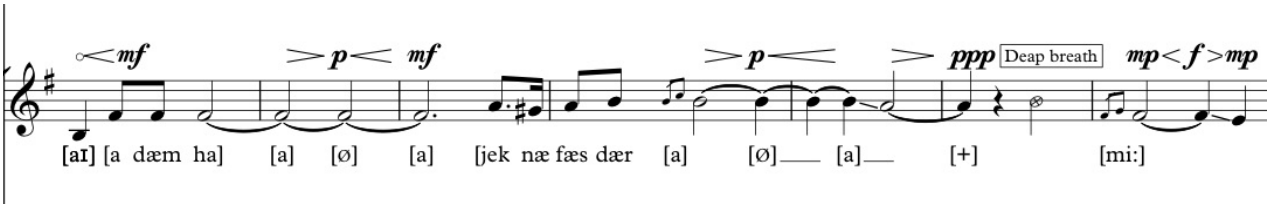

Figure 2.15 - *Ay Adamha* soprano 1 part mm. 1-7

Admittedly, Hamidi claims, many of the words were lost in translation. Some syllables were too difficult to transliterate through IPA. Overall, though the language doesn't sound like intelligible Farsi, Hamidi still enjoys the piece for what it is. Translating elements of Persian singing techniques still adds to the piece's musicality even if it's not emblematic of a "traditional" style.

Figure 2.16 shows another dimension of transliteration as well. In m. 30, Hamidi is using Western notation to attempt to capture a technique frequently used in Persian classical music. This is a "very [Western] new-music way of writing something" that you would never see in Persian notation, Hamidi says, but it captures exactly what the effect is—a slow accelerando to double time.

[218] Nima Hamidi, phone interview by author, May 26, 2020.

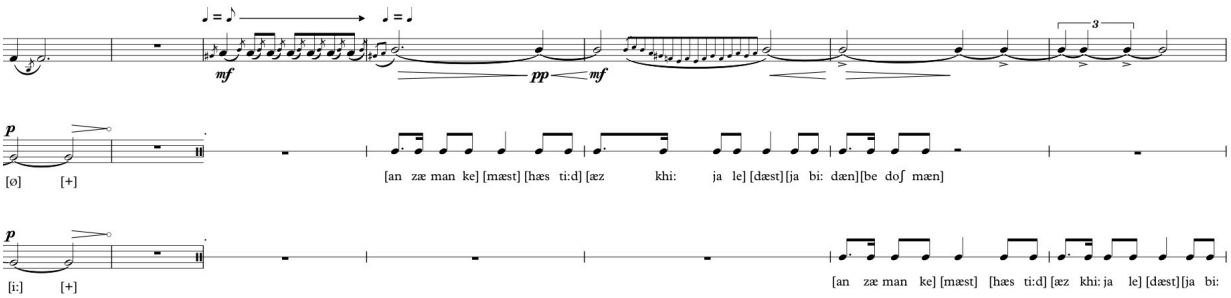

Figure 2.16 - *Ay Adamha* mm. 28-34

Nima credits his capacity for effective transliteration to listening, practicing, and thinking deeply about how to "map those sounds with the notation I and the performers have shared access to."

The speaker in Yushij's poem repeats, with increasing urgency, a plea to the subjects. "Hey people!" Hamidi's program notes from the score provide a glimpse into his compositional process and how he captures this insistent call to action in *Ay Adamha*.

> Whilst this piece is a contemporary interpretation of Iranian traditional music, it is an attempt to discover non-narrative temporality structures [and integrate] distorted conventional musical elements. Influenced by Persian performance, textures are constructed in a heterophonic fashion. Indeed, this piece is a solo improvisation written for the ensemble. Meanwhile, *Ay Adamha* is referring to humanity and its ignorance toward social morality.

One of the "distorted conventional musical elements" Nima explores in *Ay Adamha* is timbre. The opening line of text (Figure 2.15) shows how the singer is to change the vowel on a sustained pitch. This shifting of the source of resonance is a style of ornamentation that is another common technique in Persian vocal and instrumental music but does not have a standard notational equivalent in Western practices. His illustration of shifting vowel shapes alludes to Berio's notation in *Sequenza III* (Figure 1.20).

Hamidi mirrors this technique in the oboe part as well. He incorporates long drone pitches in his oboe writing that evolve into a distorted sound and then return to the original pitch. He says this distortion of a sustained pitch is evocative of ancient Persian culture. He cites the

Kamancheh, a bowed Persian instrument, as his inspiration for incorporating this effect into his writing for the oboe.

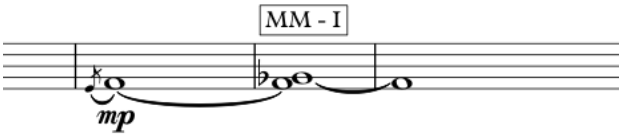

Figure 2.17 - *Ay Adamha* oboe part mm. 19-21

Figure 2.17 shows the oboe's first entrance in the piece, marking a break in the singing. The effect of the pitch distortion functions as an interruption to grab the attention of the listener. Hamidi uses the oboe in this regard to underscore the speaker's sense of urgency before the next stanza of the poem begins, repeating the phrase "hey, people!"

As the piece develops, Hamidi allows the sustained oboe drones to distort even more radically, adding to the perseverance of Yushij's speaker. Figure 2.18 shows a morphing multiphonic, emerging from a higher note in the oboe's register, breaking into more complex pitch material than Figure 2.17.

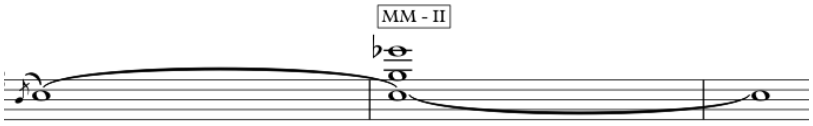

Figure 2.18 - *Ay Adamha* oboe part mm. 63-65

Hamidi explained to me that he felt the oboe was the perfect instrument to communicate disruption and urgency in this context. His previous experience writing for the oboe as a solo instrument taught him that the oboe is capable of expressing a wide range of emotions. Several composition teachers, Hamidi claims, have told him not to expect too much from oboists in terms of range and dynamics, but he thinks this is a misrepresentation of the oboe's poignant characteristics.

He points to the physicality of playing the oboe as one of his favorite characteristics of the instrument. As all oboists know, the back pressure from blowing highly pressurized air through a narrow aperture can create the appearance of suffering. Though Quantz and others argued against over-exertion in the 18th century (see pgs. 19-20), the tension of this physicality adds a great deal to the music, in Hamidi's opinion.

Another major takeaway from my conversation with the composer, is how deeply he thinks about the role of time in music. For context, *Bup Bup Neemana* is a five-minute piece with a thirteen-page score, and *Ay Adamha* is roughly a ten-minute piece with a three-page score. Hamidi explains that his use of the phrase "non-narrative temporality structures" refers to the notion of how time feels different depending on context in which it is perceived. While Western culture, including Western classical music, depends heavily on synchronous time, Persian classical music rarely does. Time in Iranian culture is less bound to a universal standard than it is in the U.S. Hamidi's music allows for time to move freely at its own pace. Two musical elements he uses to challenge the linearity of time in his music are texture and silence.

Hamidi asserts that "texture influences our perception of time." A busy, polyphonic texture might move time forward, but a sparse texture can slow things down. Hamidi composed *Ay Adamha* for three performers but envisions each line as being part of the same whole. A unified idea is being presented across all three lines—neither in conflict nor counterpoint with one another. This interplay between the oboe and voices is inspired by Persian music traditions that connect vocal and instrumental lines as a singularity. This single line delivers a narrative that challenges the audience's sense of time.

Hamidi also challenges the perception of time in his music through the use of silences. "Silence allows sound to have its space." If a piece of music is too active, Hamidi stresses, the

message may be lost on the audience. A well-timed moment of silence can incite contemplative thought. The silence in m. 29 (Figure 2.16) allows the upcoming section to stand in stark contrast with the music that came before it. “How do you expect your audience to ‘listen’ if you don’t give them space to think?” He says silence is an obvious trait of Iranian music, and in the case of *Ay Adamha,* it further strengthens the message of the text.

Performer Perspectives

I first collaborated with Hamidi on a piece for violin, viola, and oboe, *Suspended Notions,* in the summer of 2015. I was drawn to the sense of stillness in his music, as well as his idiomatic writing for the oboe. I suggested that Poor Puppet commission him for CUSP, thinking he would write something interesting for our unique instrumentation. This piece presented several challenges to the performers. My interviews with Porter and Petrongelli centered on two general themes: the challenges of language and diction, as well as Hamidi’s use of timbre and extended techniques.

The main challenge to interpreting this piece was communicating in a language none of the performers speak. Both Porter and Petrongelli described their process of learning the diction, which gave me some perspective on the way singers think about language. I will first summarize what I learned about diction from interviewing both Porter and Petrongelli, then I will discuss how their frame of understanding helped them learn *Ay Adamha.*

Amy Petrongelli has taught undergraduate diction in classes at the University of Michigan and Penn State University, so she made several comparisons between the process of learning Nima’s piece to learning how to sing in Western languages. Even teaching a native English speaker to sing in English is not always intuitive. It is important to acknowledge, she stresses, the differences between spoken language and sung language. Sometimes learning from

native speakers of a language who are not trained singers or diction coaches can be detrimental because of these differences.

Good singing maximizes the resonance of the human voice. This resonance happens on vowel sounds, but vowels cannot communicate language without consonants. Consonants function like articulation to separate vowel sounds, made mostly by the tongue, soft palette, and lips. Not all vowels are made of a single component, however. In the English language, many vowels are diphthongs, meaning that the sound is created by the combination of two vowels in a single syllable, in which the sound begins as one vowel and moves toward another. These diphthongs manifest differently in sung speech versus spoken speech. For example, the word "day" has two components: the long "a" sound sliding into the long "e" sound, represented by the character [eɪ]. In spoken English, Petrongelli points out, these two components of the diphthong carry an equal distribution across the word, but in sung English, the singer must prolong the "a" sound and shift to the "e" as close to the end of the sung note as possible to maintain both a resonant sound and the intelligibility of the word.

Because of these diphthongs, English is not an ideal language to sing while developing a healthy vocal technique. Italian, by contrast, has no diphthongs and only five, fixed vowels, which is why many young singers begin studying Italian. Both Porter and Petrongelli said that their experience learning diction, first in Italian, then French, German, and English, has built a foundation that helps them approach singing in other languages. Ultimately though, they stressed that an understanding of the meaning of the words must always take precedence over proper pronunciation. "It's easy to get stuck in the small details of pronunciation when you don't know the meaning of the words you're singing."

Since *Ay Adamha* is in Farsi, both singers knew their pronunciations wouldn't be perfect, and did not want to focus too much on the small details. They both agreed that the easiest approach to learning the text was to listen to Hamidi recite the poetry and mimic his pronunciation. After becoming comfortable with the words, they used the IPA as a guide when reading the score. Porter asserts, "It's harder for me to intellectualize a sound spelled out in IPA than it is to imitate someone else making the sound." Petrongelli adds that some IPA characters carry slightly different connotations depending on the language. For example, the "æ" character—which is a diphthong vowel (see Figure 2.15)—that Nima uses frequently throughout the piece, is pronounced differently in Farsi than it is in French or German. The multi-step process—Hamidi transcribing Farsi into IPA, then speaking the text for Porter and Petrongelli, who mimic the speech of Hamidi while reading the IPA, then turning that speech into sung text—explains why some of the poetry was lost in translation.

In addition to the challenge of communicating through language, *Ay Adamha* presents difficult extended techniques for both the singers and the oboist. The singers are tasked with navigating the boundary between singing and speech, while the oboist executes both beating and morphing multiphonics, as well as improvised explicit double tonguing.

Beginning in m. 31, the vocal lines are delivered in rhythmic speech while the oboe plays a flowing, ornamented melody (see Figure 2.16). I spoke to Porter and Petrongelli about the challenges of speaking with musical inflection. Petrongelli remembers this section of music being difficult to deliver. To compete with the volume of the oboe, she was tempted to speak at a louder volume in a higher tessitura of the voice. Raising the voice like that, however, can cause the laryngeal muscles to tighten. She had to consciously keep the range of her voice low so that

the muscles were more relaxed when it came time to switch back to singing.

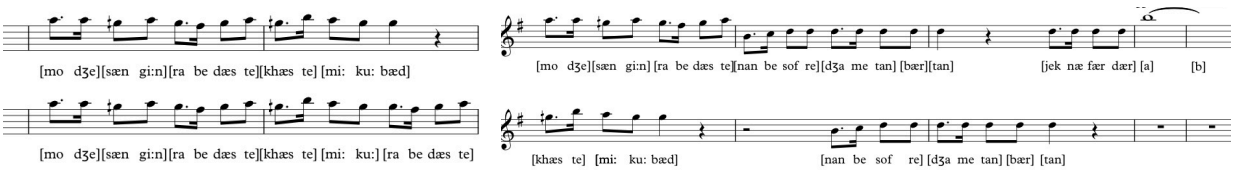

Figure 2.19 - *Ay Adamha* soprano 1 and 2 parts mm. 75-80

Shortly after the spoken section, the singers have to sing at the top of their register (Figure 2.19), so maintaining a relaxed larynx is crucial to maintain enough stamina for this difficult ending.

Hamidi, while creating challenges for the oboist in *Ay Adamha*, seems to understand what the oboe can do well—long, melismatic lines, complex multiphonics, and aggressive articulation. As I noted earlier, he always encouraged me to take my time with melodic lines and focus less on alignment with other parts. He preferred that my melodies sound more improvisatory and less concerned with synchronous time.

Hamidi understands the variety of multiphonics the oboe is capable of using and employs them to great effect in this piece. Bruno Bartolozzi, in *New Sounds for Woodwind,* distinguishes oboe multiphonics into two categories based on their pitch content, "homogenous chords" and "broken sounds." These broken sounds result when two simultaneous pitches emerge from the multiphonic within a semitone of each other, causing a beating effect.[219] Peter Veale refers to these as "beating multiphonics."[220] Hamidi incorporates a beating multiphonic in Figure 2.17. The morphing multiphonic, shown in Figures 2.17 and 2.18 and described in the previous section, is particular idiomatic. Both of these morphing multiphonics require a timbral fingering for the monophonic pitch to aid in a smooth transition in and out of the multiphonic.

[219] Bruno Bartolozzi, *New Sounds for Woodwind*, 42.
[220] Peter Veale, et. al, *The Techniques of Oboe Playing,* 70.

Another extended technique Hamidi utilizes as a jarring effect to underscore Yushij's words comes in mm. 71-74. Nora Post refers to this as "explicit multiple tonguing" and shows precedent for this type of notation in the oboe music of Vinko Globokar.[221]

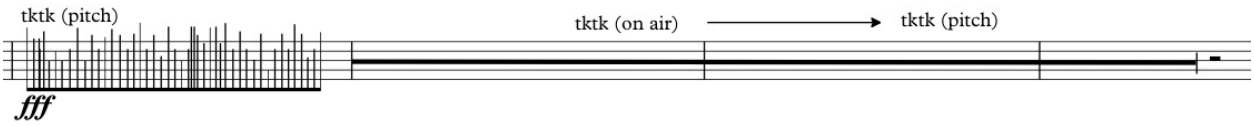

Figure 2.20 - *Ay Adamha* oboe part mm. 71-74

This technique represents one final plea from the poem's speaker, exaggerating the interruption to its most extreme effect at the climax of the piece. While many of the oboe's earlier injections are made with smooth and subtle entrances, this exclamation is impossible to ignore.

Ay Adamha has given me a new understanding of the process of linguistic and musical transliteration and provided an outlet to express some of the oboe's most raw extended techniques.

[221] Post, 72-73.

***don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* by Baldwin Giang**

don't be so overly dramatic, chuck is a duo for oboe and mezzo-soprano by Baldwin Giang, commissioned by So Much Hot Air (Pulse and Beattie). This piece was premiered at the University of Pennsylvania in November 2017 and had a subsequent performance on my lecture recital at UW-Madison in October 2019. This piece juxtaposes truth and partisanship in a virtuosic, theatrical exhibition. I will analyze how Giang's compositional approach both considers the needs and strengths of specific performers and expands technical possibilities for the oboe and voice.

Baldwin Giang

Baldwin Giang (b. 1992) is a Chicago-based composer whose music aims to empower communities of audiences and performers by creating concert experiences that are opportunities for collective wonder and judgment. Described as "taut and cohesive...challenging and rewarding" (Cacophony), Baldwin's music has been played in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center in Chicago, and Chateau de Fontainebleau. He is lucky to have collaborated with such celebrated performers as the Albany Symphony, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, New York Youth Symphony, International Contemporary Ensemble, Argento Ensemble, [Switch~ Ensemble], orkest de ereprijs, Arditti Quartet, Spektral Quartet, JACK Quartet, Curtis Symphony Orchestra, Yale Symphony Orchestra, University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, Opera Theatre of Yale College, Indiana University's New Music Ensemble, UNT's Nova Ensemble, Rage Thormbones, So Much Hot Air, and AEPEX Contemporary Performance. Among the international and domestic festivals that have presented his work are: Yale in Norfolk's New Music Workshop, the American Music Festival, Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival, June in Buffalo, New Music on the Point, NUNC!3, Atlantic Music Festival, SCI National Student Conference, North American Saxophone Association Conference, National Student Electronic Music Event, Ecoles d'arts Americaines de Fontainebleau (FR), 24th Annual Young Composers' Meeting (NL), Valencia International Performance Academy (SP), highSCORE (IT), and Festival Contrasti (IT).

Baldwin is a graduate of Yale University, earning a B.A. with Honors in both Music and Political Science, and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, earning a M.A. as a Regents Fellow. At Yale, Baldwin earned the Beekman Cannon Friends Prize awarded for the best senior musical composition, and the Abraham Beekman Cox Prize awarded to the "most promising and gifted composer" in his class. As a winner of the New York Youth Symphony's First Music Prize, Baldwin won a commission for a new work premiered in Carnegie Hall in May 2019. As a winner of the Prix Ravel, he won a cash prize and commission performed by members of Ensemble Intercontemporain and Ensemble Kalliope at the Chateau de Fontainebleau in July 2019. He is also a laureate of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Civic Orchestra Composers

Project, commissioned to write a piece that was premiered at Chicago's Symphony Center. His music has been published by PARMA as a winner of their composer competition. Other recognition has come from the ASCAP Morton Gould Competition (Finalist - 2017, 2019), Michigan Music Teacher's Association, and the University of Pennsylvania's David Halstead Prize.

Baldwin is currently a PhD student and Division of Humanities Fellow at the University of Chicago where he studies with Sam Pluta and Anthony Cheung. His past teachers have included Bright Sheng, Evan Chambers, Kristin Kuster, Kathryn Alexander, Konrad Kaczmarek, Michael Klingbeil, and Stephen Gorbos. Additional studies and masterclasses with Hans Abrahamsen, Tristan Murail, Christopher Theofanidis, Martin Bresnick, Simon Steen-Andersen, Stefano Gervasoni, Allain Gaussin, Francois Paris, Martijn Padding, Richard Ayres, and Yehudi Wyner.

Program Notes

don't be so overly dramatic, chuck is a tragi-comedy that uses excerpts from a public speech by President Donald Trump given the day after the his inauguration, Sean Spicer's first White House Press Briefing, and an interview between Kellyanne Conway and MSNBC's Chuck Todd also on the subject of the Inauguration. Interspersed throughout the body of the piece, and shown in italics, are fragments of text inspired by the political theorist Hannah Arendt's essay "Truth and Politics" (1967). Subsumed within the chaotic noise of the other texts, and revealing itself in its entirety only by the end of the piece, Arendt's wisdom proves to be both of unprecedentedly timely importance, and in present danger of being lost to public life. Arendt presciently argues that the conditions of the political sphere are surprisingly not well suited to affirming factual truth, as our current political discourse tragically shows. Art, similarly, has never had a solid relationship with factual truth, and I argue it rarely, if ever, has attempted to have one. Instead it is often thought of as striving for a different kind of truth. Insofar as art is premised on a negation of factual truth, however slight, can art, through its own brand of truth or lack of truth, illuminate the deficiencies of our political sphere in new ways? Even more ambitiously, can art reclaim what politics has lost?"

Text

don't be so overly dramatic, chuck by Baldwin Giang
Text excerpts from Kellyanne Conway, Sean Spicer, Donald Trump, and Hannah Arendt

"Psstt. This crowd is massive. Psstt pst pst. Look how far back it goes... This audience is the biggest ever. *Fact.* This crowd is HUUGE. Look how far back it goes! *Facts and.* Have you ever seen a bigger crowd at one of these things? It looks like a thousand-and-a-half people. *Facts and events.*

Now the audience was the biggest ever. But this crowd was massive. *Facts are*. Look how far back it goes. This crowd was massive. *Are Infin*.

It went all the way back to the Washington monument ... *Infinitely*. It looked like a million-and-a-half people...

Fragile things

It was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe.

The way that you just laughed at me is actually symbolic of the—*Facts*— very representative of the way we're treated by the press. *Facts and*. I'll just ignore it. *Events*. I'm bigger than that. I'm a kind and gracious person.

The liar wants to change the world.

Don't be so overly dramatic about it, Chuck. *Facts*—You're saying it's a falsehood. *Are infin*. Sean Spicer, our press secretary, *Infinitely*. gave alternative facts to that

Are fragile things...
Once they are lost,
fragile things
no rational effort,
will ever
once lost,
ever
them
bring
back"

by Baldwin Giang

Composer Perspectives

So Much Hot Air first approached Giang to write a duo piece in the fall of 2016. The following summer, he thought of the idea for the text he wanted to set. At the time, like many Americans, Giang was grappling with the weight of American life under the presidency of Donald Trump and was processing a lot of feelings. Part of his process, he decided would be to create a cathartic, political piece. For text, Giang looked to the German American writer, Hannah Arendt, whose essay, *Truth and Politics,* he wrote about for his senior thesis at Yale. In our interview, Giang recalled that a resurgence of Arendt's writing was emerging on social media around this time. Many were pointing to the urgency and foresight with which Arendt—dead for more than three decades—had articulated the importance of preserving fact in political discourse.

Giang looked to two particularly prescient texts from "Truth and Politics" to provide the main source material for this piece (excerpted material underlined).

> "Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories—even the most wildly speculative ones—produced by the human mind; they occur in the field of the ever-changing affairs of men, in whose flux there is nothing more permanent than the admittedly relative permanence of the human mind's structure. Once they are lost, no rational effort will ever bring them back."[222]

> "The liar, on the contrary, needs no such doubtful accommodation to appear on the political scene; he has the great advantage that he always is, so to speak, already in the midst of it. He is an actor by nature; he says what is not so because he wants things to be different from what they are—that is, he wants to change the world."[223]

In order to highlight the power of Arendt's words, Giang decided to juxtapose this text with lies from the Trump administration; however, he struggled to choose which lies to use as source material. At the time he was contemplating this point—in August 2017—the volume and onslaught of lies was already so much to keep up with. Earlier that summer, President Trump had fired the director of the FBI, James Comey, and protests and counter protests had recently rocked

[222] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought,* 231.
[223] Ibid., 250.

the city of Charlottesville, yet Giang thought, "What could I offer artistically to an event so emotionally raw?" Nearly every day, Trump was making factually incorrect statements, and attempting to change history.

Ultimately, Giang decided to write about the inauguration and the Trump administration's lies about the attendance and size of the event, which felt like the best way to capture a pattern of behavior that would come to define the presidency. The timelessness of Trump's "first lie" as president felt to Giang like something people will continuously point to in history. Though the overblown Inauguration statistics constituted a relatively innocuous lie, Giang points out, what matters is the precedent set by this lie and the consequences of spreading false information as fact. "The problem is not that Trump is lying, but that people believe his lies."[224]

As mentioned in Giang's program notes, he excerpted text from Sean Spicer, Kellyanne Conway, and Trump himself to use in contrast with the words of Arendt.

> "the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe."[225]
>
> "Here's a picture of the crowd," the president explained. "Now, the audience was the biggest ever, but this crowd was massive. Look how far back it goes. This crowd was massive. And I would actually take that camera and take your time [scanning the crowd] if you want to know the truth."[226]
>
> "Don't be so overly dramatic about it, Chuck. What-- You're saying it's a falsehood. And they're giving Sean Spicer, our press secretary, gave alternative facts to that. But the point remains…"[227]

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[224] Baldwin Giang, Interview by the author, September 27, 2019.
[225] "Spicer: Inauguration had largest audience ever," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKzHXelQi_A.
[226] Jenna Johnson, "In his first major TV interview as president, Trump is obsessed with his popularity," Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/01/26/in-his-first-major-tv-interview-as-president-trump-is-endlessly-obsessed-about-his-popularity/.
[227] NBC News, "Meet the Press 1/22/2017," https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-01-22-17-n710491.

Giang devised three speech characteristics to categorize the lies of the Trump administration: exaggerated speech, incomprehensible speech, and belligerent speech. His notes (see Figure 2.1) show the process of compiling these four sources of text.

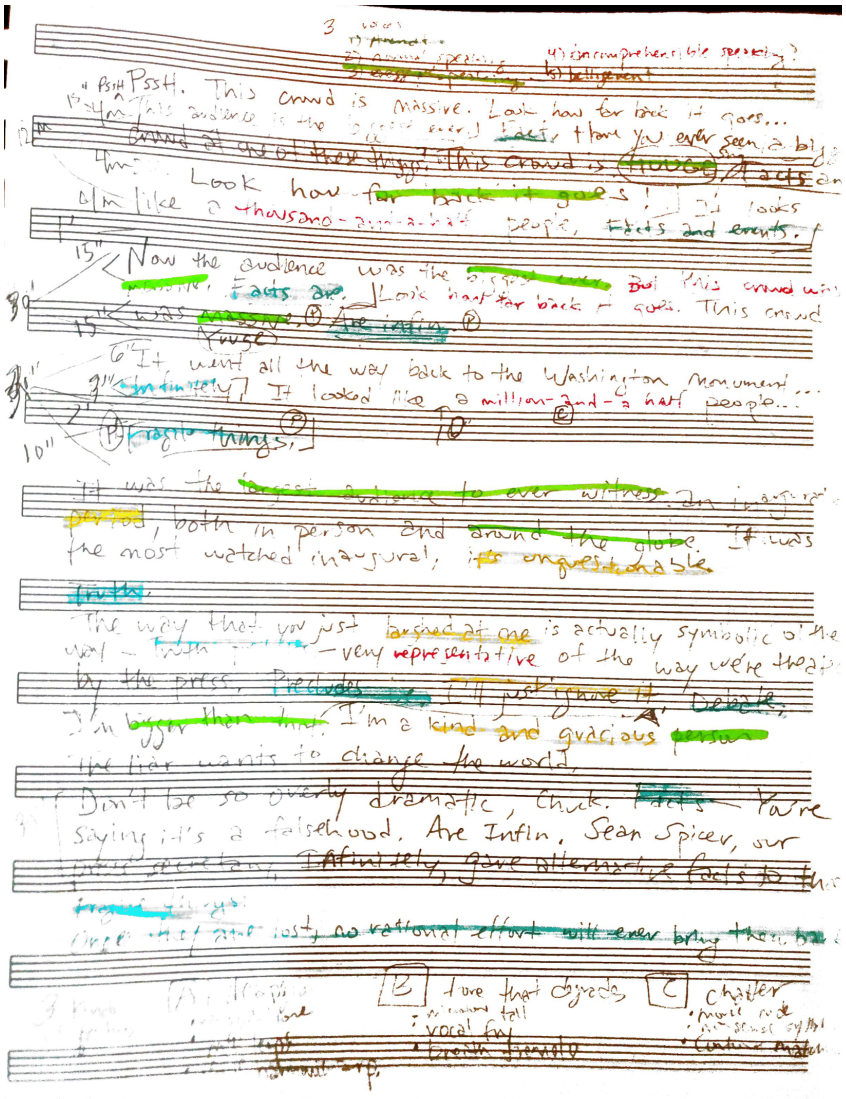

Figure 2.21 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* Composer Sketches

The words of Arendt, "Facts and events are infinitely fragile things…" appear as incomplete fragments throughout the first half of the piece, interspersed between the contrasting text material. These moments are marked by straight tone singing in the voice and singing into the instrument, quarter tones, and whistle tones in the English horn part.

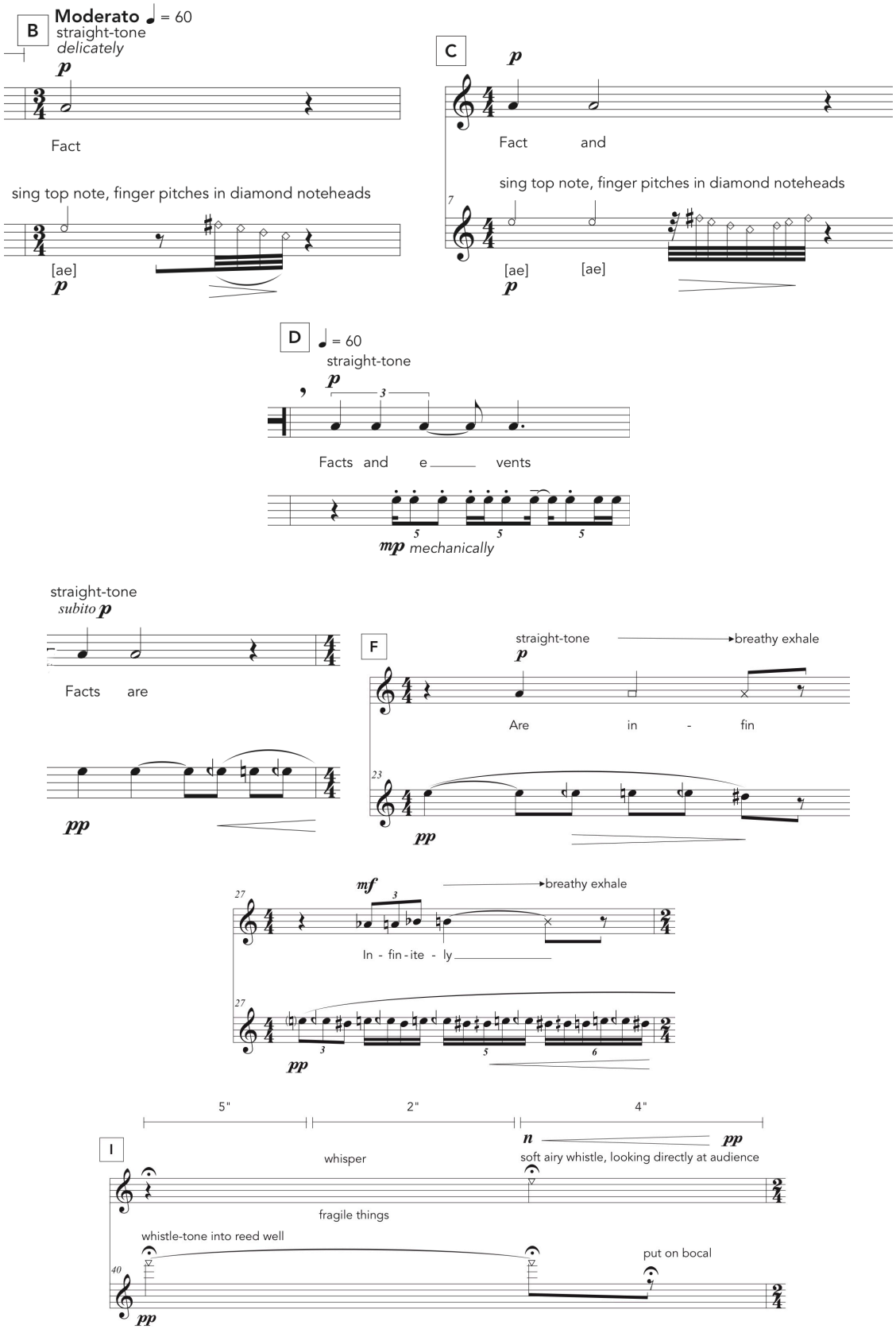

Figure 2.22 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* Arendt text mm. 4, 7, 11, 16, 23, 27, and 40

Giang's contrasting text material—the exaggerated, incomprehensible, and belligerent speech—becomes progressively more unintelligible, both semantically and musically.

Exaggerated Speech

The "exaggerated speech" component of the Trump administration's words appears throughout Giang's text, exemplified by phrases like, "now the audience was the biggest ever, but this crowd was huge." Musically, Baldwin pairs this text with operatic arpeggios and wide intervallic leaps for the voice and arpeggios, trills, consonant multiphonics, and other tonal/diatonic sounds for the English horn.

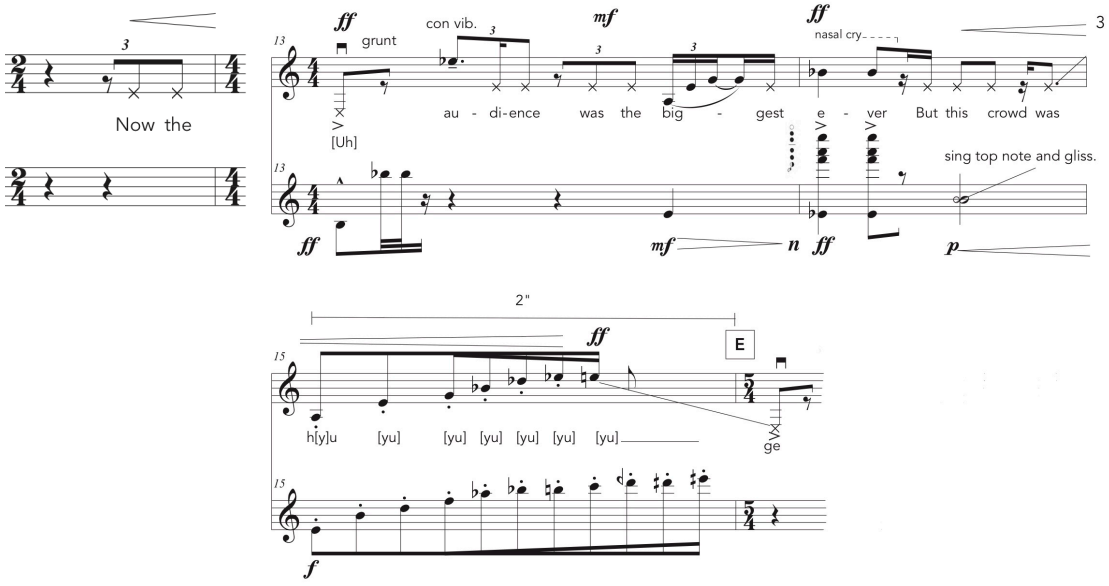

Figure 2.23 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* mm. 12-15

Incomprehensible Speech

An example of Giang's use of "incomprehensible speech" appears in mm. 28-39 with the phrase "It looked like a million and a half people." The incomprehensible speech is underscored by micro-tonal writing for English horn, which is mimicked by the voice. The character of this speech is absurd, annoying and repetitive. Segments of incomprehensible speech often spin out

into a chaotic, improvised loop, as in m. 38. Giang provides a space for the mezzo-soprano to improvise a vocal effect akin to a CD skipping. Linda Hirst's advice on improvising to find the desired sound of a particular technique is helpful in circumstances like these. "Sometimes the act of improvising can itself unlock the appropriate vocal responses a singer requires to meet the need of a new performance situation."[228]

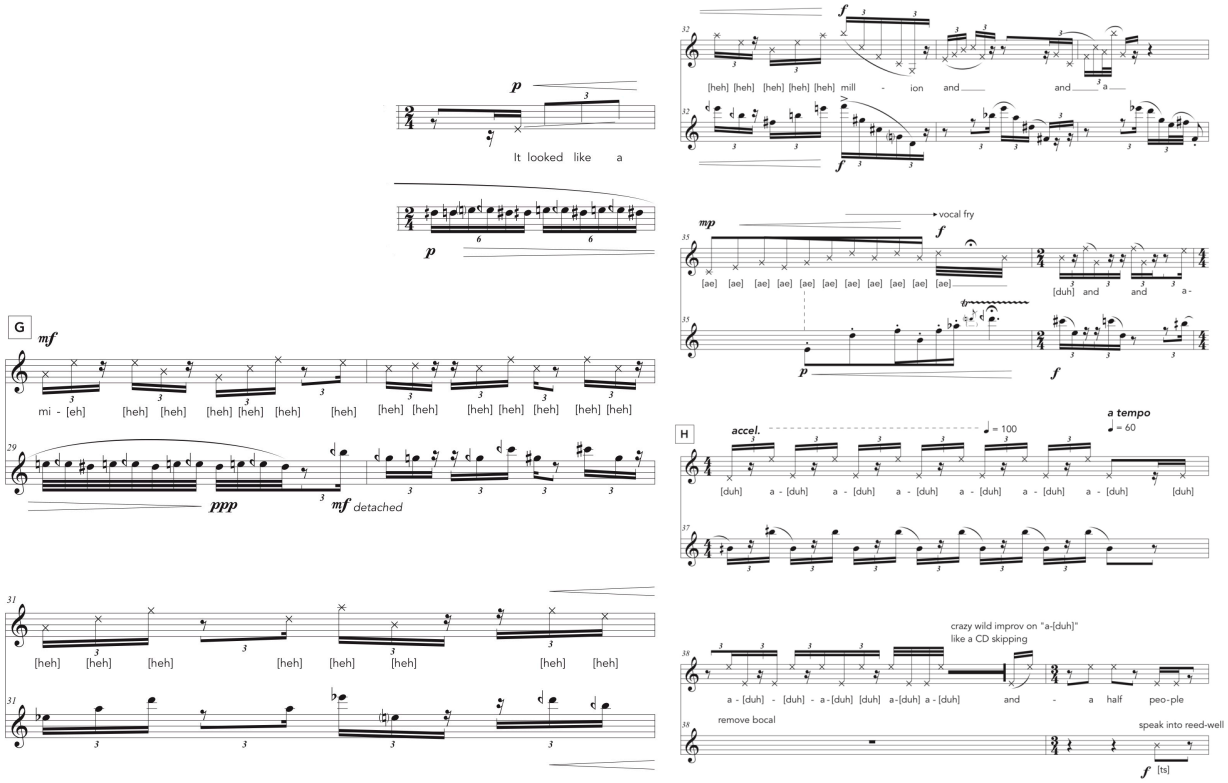

Figure 2.24 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* mm. 28-39

[228] Hirst, 195.

Belligerent Speech

The belligerent speech characteristics are the most incomprehensible, and therefore the most complex musically. This speech is found in phrases like “period, both in person, period…” (Figure 2.25) and “Chuck…Chuck…Chuk…Chuck…CHUCK!” (Figure 2.26). Belligerent speech phrases coincide with dense, irregular rhythms and multiphonics in the English horn and techniques like nasal crying and shouting into a paper megaphone for the mezzo-soprano.

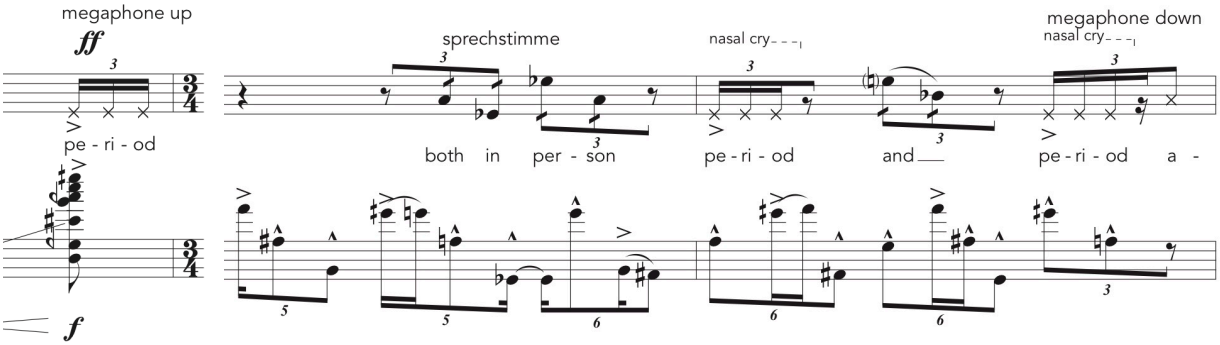

Figure 2.25 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* mm. 47-49

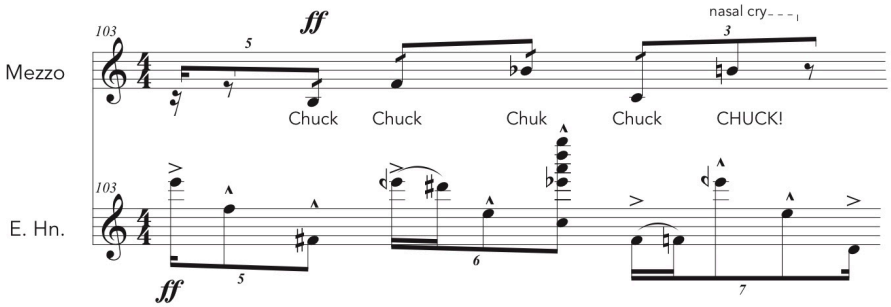

Figure 2.26 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* m. 103

Performer Perspectives

The collaborative development of *don’t be so overly dramatic, chuck* was a uniquely personal, and deeply satisfying process. Giang’s writing stretches both Beattie and me to our

limits, while also allowing us to show off our unique strengths as performers. Our conversations about this piece pinpointed its virtuosic demands on extended technique and character transformation, particularly as those demands illustrate Giang's process of composing for us specifically.

Giang first worked with Beattie when he was an undergraduate student at Yale in Beattie's "How to Write for the Voice" workshop, taught by her duo, Albatross. The first piece he wrote for her was lyrical, reminiscent of Debussy, and a setting of the poetry of Yeats. The second piece utilized a chant from Hildegard von Bingen and involved live electronics processing the singer's breath, heartbeat, and voice. From those experiences, as well as seeing other performances by Beattie, Giang wanted to highlight her theatrical strengths as a performer in the new work. The "opera singer megalomania character" that Giang creates does this perfectly. The piece opens with Beattie warming up her voice as she incredulously takes in the "massive crowd."

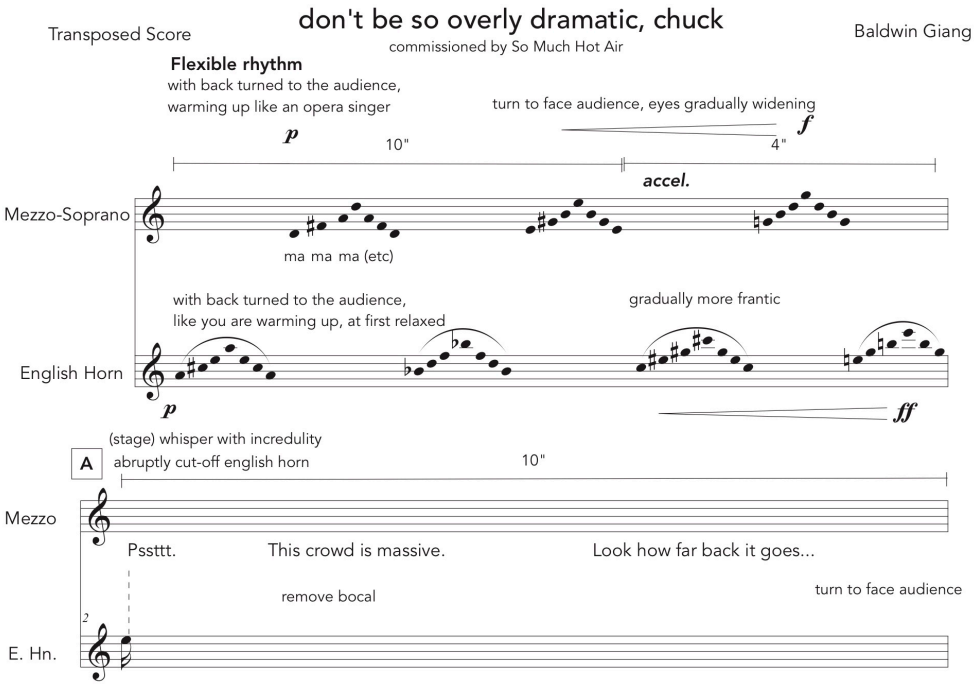

Figure 2.27 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* mm. 1-2

Similar to Livengood's approach in *Bup Bup Neemana*, Giang also wanted to show an instrumental side to the voice, challenging the conventional roles of singers. These instrumental qualities appear most to underscore the incomprehensible speech and the belligerent speech (see Figures 2.24, 2.25, and 2.26). The incomprehensible speech motive that outlines "It looked like a million and a half people!" at rehearsal G shows how the mezzo-soprano emulates the English horn contours. These techniques challenge Mattheson's idea that "instruments permit more musical artificialities than voices do"[229] Giang's extended techniques for the voice—as wide ranging as quarter tones, *Sprechstimme*, vocal fry, guttural grunting, nasal crying, and singing into a paper megaphone—create "artificialities" that highlight the unlinking of truth and politics.

Though Giang and I had not collaborated musically before this project, we did know each other quite well. In an early conversation with Giang about this piece, I told him I wanted a "piece where I can shred." At that point, most of So Much Hot Air's repertoire was either lyrical or sparse in texture, and I wanted something more virtuosic to add to the mix. Baldwin knew, based on my personality, that I would be an adventurous collaborator who would be excited to try new things. We met via Skype several times during the early fall 2017 to review some extended techniques. We each had a copy of the Peter Veale's *The Techniques of Oboe Playing* and went through nearly every section together, trying things like checking multiphonic partials against a tuner to decipher pitch content and sticking a French horn mouthpiece on an English horn bocal. Ultimately, Giang included a number of English horn extended techniques in this piece, including quarter tones, multiphonics, speaking/singing into the reed well, key clicks, timbral trills, and whistle tones.

Of these extended techniques, Giang's use of articulated syllables and spoken words directly into the English horn without a reed or bocal, are particularly inventive. It seems to me

[229] Mattheson, 423.

that Giang is following a similar instinct to his vocal writing by reversing the role of the instrumental and vocal.

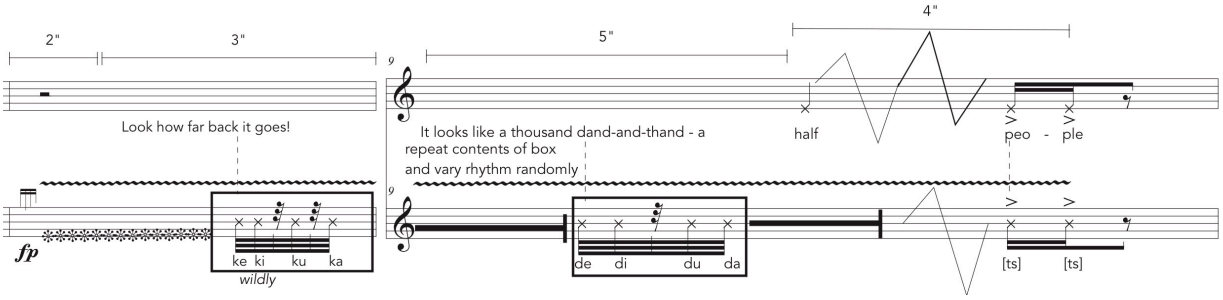

Figure 2.28 - *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* mm. 8-9

While Nora Post considered this technique to be mostly ineffectual (see pgs. 117-118) compared to other woodwind instruments, the narrow aperture of the English horn reed well masks the vowels and articulations in a way that works well in this piece. The resultant murmuring effect signifies unintelligible crowd noise and may also symbolize the eclipsing of facts by political partisanship.

Despite all of the technical demands of this piece, perhaps the greatest challenge lies in the theatrical demands. The characters the oboist and mezzo-soprano must embody are strongly oppositional from one section to the next. As the piece progresses, the unintelligibility of the Trump administration's quotes intensifies, contrasting even more from the gravity of Arendt's words. It was difficult to maintain a physical presence on stage that communicated these extremes, while also playing some of the hardest music I've ever learned.

Overall, the challenges inherent in *don't be so overly dramatic, chuck* changed my perception on the capabilities and limitations of the English horn and challenged me to consider my stage presence in the way a singer does. Though the piece captures a specific moment in time, both its message and importance feel more relevant now than when we premiered it.

Concluding Remarks

The five new works I have presented follow a rich lineage of music that connects the oboe and voice. From the 18th century ideals of rhetorical practices in instrumental performance, to the 19th century oboe as a parallel to the voice in its expressive symbolism of the feminine, exotic, and joyful, to the 20th century expansion of extended techniques, the oboe's development has always maintained close ties to vocal expression. The works by McMasters, Livengood, Hamidi, and Giang seem like the natural evolution of these traditions.

The process of commissioning these pieces, what initially began as a passion project, ultimately expanded my relationship to vocal music, challenged my identity as an instrumentalist, and cultivated my pedagogy as an oboe teacher. Researching the history of the oboe and voice brought me to a deeper understanding of the ways in which the oboe has paralleled vocal expression for over 300 years.

In looking forward, I want to continue developing the repertoire for these instruments, embrace my identity as a composer more publicly, and incorporate the techniques I've learned from this process in creating my own music. I think the rhetorical quality inherent in the oboe's early history as an obbligato in vocal arias can provide a framework for oboe and voice music in the 21st century. While many performances of new music today don't consider the experiences and knowledge of their audiences, I want to create stronger connections with my audiences as a performer. Performing as a means of eloquent declamation can re-center audience experiences and opinions, which is important for keeping traditions of Western classical music alive. As Burgess and Haynes say, "in rhetorical terms, not to be eloquent is to fail as a performer. And eloquence means above anything else, moving your audience—any audience."[230]

[230] Burgess and Haynes, *The Pathetick Musician,* 46.

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