Research on Repertoire Used in Vocal Recital

Drew Van Wagoner

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RESEARCH ON REPertoire USED IN
VOCAL RECITAL

by

Drew Van Wagoner

Report of recital performed in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Music Education

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

The selections in the recital given by the candidate can be divided into four sections. The first four songs can claim as their origin in time the early Italian school of the Baroque period. The two selections following these represent the oratorio. The aria by Haydn properly comes from the Classical era. The aria from Mendelssohn's oratorio is from the Romantic period, but it is referred to as Classicist-Romanticist, due to different elements of style and technique used by the composer. The third part of the recital is composed of art songs, taken from the German Lieder group, the first two by Schubert, the remaining two by Richard Strauss. The songs by Duparc and Lalo represent the French school. The last two songs in the candidate's recital are by contemporary composers, Jean Berger and Cyril Scott.

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EARLY ITALIAN SCHOOL

A Search for a More Ideal Expression

Obscured text resented.--In the period around 1600 a strong resentment arose against obscuring the text, which resulted from the elaborate polyphonic treatment. Prior to this time the Flemish tradition, with its stress on contrapuntal style and much elaboration, dominated the scene. The reaction against this became so strong, that in the course of a few decades single melodic line with instrumental background dominated the stylistic trend, giving rise to the solo song with instrumental accompaniment.¹

The Florentine Camerata.--A group, which became known as the Florentine Camerata, played a major role in the movement to find a more ideal form of vocal expression. A wealthy Florentine nobleman by the name of Giovanni Bardi, himself a poet and amateur musician, drew about him a group of poets, artists and musicians for the purpose of finding some method of dramatic expression of a more suitable form than was then known.² They hoped to do this by imitating the ancient Greek

Though many members of the Camerata contributed to this movement, Vincenzo Galilei (d. 1591) and Guilio Caccini will be mentioned as having made significant contributions toward the search for better dramatic expression. They used music in their drama as a means of declamation, their attempts resulting in, perhaps, the first monodies. These contained the germ of both the recitative and the aria.\(^2\) In 1602, Caccini published a work, entitled *Nuove Musiche*, containing arias and madrigals in the new style of monodonic recitative with thorough-bass accompaniment. This work is perhaps the most singularly significant representation of the movement away from the Flemish tradition.\(^3\) Cavalieri and Peri should also be mentioned as having made important contributions. In the operas of these four men the recitative assumed its definite form, and the basso continuo or thorough bass appeared for the first time.\(^4\)

The members of the Camerata accomplished what they set out to do, namely, to free music from the bonds of elaborate polyphony. This had gone too far, however, for now, rigid word-dominated recitative dominated, placing the music in a subordinate position not worthy of its name.\(^5\)

\(^1\)Apel, p. 111.  \(^2\)Pratt, p. 152.  \(^3\)Apel, p. 499.  
\(^5\)Lang, p. 339.
Claudio Monteverdi.--The text could not for any length of time dominate the music so completely. Monteverdi stands out as the most important composer who attempted to do something about it. True, he agreed with the Camerata that the words should dominate the harmony, but he applied it to polyphony, not against it, as they did. He stands between two eras trying to preserve that good in the old, and yet work it with new ideals.¹ That which he could utilize dramatically from the period of polyphony he combined with the new means offered by the stile recitativo to develop a more effective means of musical expression.²

According to Lang, Monteverdi wrote dramatically and passionately because he thought real life was manifested through sorrow, passion and pain. The characters in his operas portrayed these deep feelings to the utmost. The lament of Arianna, which the candidate sang in his recital, is the song of a soul crying in agony to be saved by death. Peri, Caccini and the other members of the Camerata were too bound by rigid rules to have ever reached such dramatic heights.³

In his first opera, Orfeo, he achieved an individuality of style which few composers ever attain in their first major work. He used the orchestra to help establish the mood desired in the text; consequently, it did not remain in the back-

ground to be almost unnoticed. In later works he reduced the orchestra in size as was the custom of his contemporaries. His melodies used bolder intervals to achieve greater dramatic effect, and he used closed forms with his solo passages, which dominated opera for two hundred years.\(^1\) His series of dramas from *Orfeo* (1607) to *Poppea* (1642) made the opera the Most popular form in Italy and started an interest that gradually spread everywhere.\(^2\)

The followers of Monteverdi.--Cavalli (d. 1676) and Cesti (d. 1669) are two men worthy of mention for this time. The former, who was a student of Monteverdi, wrote forty-two operas in the tradition of his teacher. He gave the chorus a more important role and almost completely carried out the separation of aria and recitative. Cesti contributed greatly to the sensuous melodic quality of the arias which were to become typical of Italian operas.\(^3\)

By this time, opera had become a very popular medium of entertainment; in cities like Bologna and Venice it had become a passion. There were scores of theaters which performed operas, plus many private homes where they were presented. All of this led to a sort of commercialism, partially inhibiting fine artistic achievement. It became a superficial art giving way to luxury and amusement. The desire to satisfy the public caused an introduction of foreign parts to the opera, making it difficult for the serious composer. The music was soon fettered with too much ornamentation and elab-

\(^1\)Ibid, p. 340. \(^2\)Pratt, p. 170. \(^3\)Lang, pp. 351-352.
Giovanni Legrenzi (d. 1690) emerges in the last part of the seventeenth century to show that fine composers were not entirely lost to this type of commercialism. He heads the next important school of opera and was just as well at home in the oratorio, motet and instrumental music. Legrenzi possessed a very fine contrapuntal technique and had a fine reputation extending to all of Europe. His arietta, "Che fiero costume", which the candidate included in his recital, is comic in nature, as was typical of many of his compositions. It is lyric and dramatic, and its ascending-descending line lends itself quite favorably to the singer.

Francesco Durante (d. 1755) and Antonio Caldara (d. 1736), who lived about fifty years after Legrenzi, were represented in the candidate's recital. Durante was almost exclusively a church composer. His song, "Vergin, tutto amor", is a fervent prayer, a pleading from the heart seeking forgiveness. Caldara was a fine contrapuntal composer of operas, oratorios, church and instrumental music. "Comme raggio di sol" is romantic in nature, expressing deep emotional feelings. The melodic line is very flowing and expressive allowing the singer to perform naturally.

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1Ibid, pp. 353-354.  
2Ibid, p. 357.  
3Ibid, p. 454.  
THE ORATORIO

The Early Beginnings

Music as a dramatic accessory.--A look into the history of oratorio reveals that its beginning is linked closely with that of the opera. Filippo Neri (d. 1595) experimented with music as a dramatic accessory. In 1560 he employed singing in popular musical gatherings to aid in the instruction of Biblical topics.¹

The first oratorios.--Cavaliere wrote what is often called the "first oratorio". It was entitled Rappresentazioni di animo e di corpo, and was presented in Rome in about 1600. The material was of a sacred nature. It was very lengthy and technically elaborate, containing choruses, instrumental intermezzi, part song movements, and a grand final chorus.²

It was Carissimi (d. 1674) who did significant work with the sacred play. Before his time the only significant difference between opera and oratorio was the topic and the text. Both forms utilized costumes, scenery and action. They even used the same musical materials. Carissimi ignored the theatrics and often used a narrator to fill in the

¹Pratt, p. 168.
dramatic details. He also utilized the chorus more, and developed an almost distinct oratorio style.\(^1\) That Carissimi was a great oratorio composer is verified by the fact that he exerted widespread influence on other composers. This influence can be found in the works of contemporary Italian oratorios and in the compositions of such old masters as Schuetz and Handel. It appears that the latter patterned much of his choral work after Carissimi.\(^2\)

Heinrich Schuetz (d. 1672) was one of the first German composers to do important work in the field of oratorio. He produced religious concert dramas, suitable for the church as well as the concert hall. The devices he used were much like those found in modern oratorios. He used the recitative, narrators, great choruses, and an orchestra as an important accessory. Most of his narratives come from the Gospels.\(^3\)

**George Frederick Handel**

Handel occupies such a prominent place in the development of the oratorio that a discussion of him and his works is here included.

**Influence of predecessors.**—His form, technique and means of expression draw from a wide field of predecessors and traditions. When one observes that he was born and lived many years in Germany, had a great deal of experience in the

\(^1\)Ibid, p. 177. \(^2\)Lang, p. 349. \(^3\)Ibid.
French tradition, and received a large part of his training in the Italian schools, it is not difficult to understand this. The fact that he adopted England as his homeland and lived there the greater part of his life helps one see the diverse influences that affected his composing.¹

**Operas unsuccessful.**—Handel's attempts at writing opera, though artistically fine, were not accepted by the British people. This rejection was due to social, not musical, reasons. The nobility, for which opera was primarily written and from which financial support came, was too weak to support an opera company. The middle class was reluctant to put up with an entertainment performed in a foreign language. Italian opera was forced out temporarily.²

Handel turned to oratorio, and, ultimately, with great success. England was at a point politically and socially where it was enjoying new freedom, a new spirit of conquest, and it was strongly protestant. The people saw in his massive Biblical choruses the triumphal progress of England, and recognized in them their own religion.³

**His oratorios.**—The oratorios of Handel can be conveniently divided into three classes; the choral opera, which was closely similar to the Italian opera and dealt with a secular subject; the choral cantata, which was in line with the English ode and dealt with allegorical subjects without dramatic action; and the choral drama, in which class most of

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¹Ibid, p. 519.  
²Bukofzer, pp. 331-332.  
³Lang, p. 524.
his oratorios fell.¹

In the choral drama, the Baroque ideal, the revival of the Greek tragedies is more closely approached. In these the chorus represents the idealized character of the plot, in which triumph and tragedy are intermingled. If the hero is an individual, he usually appears as a spokesman for the people. Handel found the Old Testament, which abounds with grandiose situations, an ideal source of subject material for the choral drama.²

The choruses in his oratorios are the main forces. The old choral oratorio of Carissimi served as the main prototype for Handel’s dramatic use of the choruses. The English tradition of choral music influenced him greatly, for in them he showed a knowledge of the anthem and the Service. He used many styles with great skill to enhance the effectiveness of the chorus: masterful choral polyphony, a cappella passages, powerful homophonous passages, motets, madrigals, choral recitative and simple choral declamations.³

The solo numbers in his oratorios, though less important than the chorus, served a valuable function. Since his oratorios were closely related to the opera in style, the solo was essentially the same. Da capo arias are not as numerous as a more unorthodox type.⁴

The Messiah stands as the epitome of the modern oratorio, for it unites choruses, arias and recitatives into a

fine whole.\textsuperscript{1} This was a highly individual work, however, different from his other oratorios. To base one's conception of Handel's works on this most popular work would be misleading. The Messiah lacked any outward dramatic action, and was devoted completely to devotional contemplation.\textsuperscript{2}

**The Successors of Handel**

**Joseph Haydn.---**Haydn is perhaps the next composer to do significant, if not great, work with the oratorio. His *Il Ritorno di Tobia* has been called the finest example of eighteenth century oratorio that exists. The Creation and The Seasons are two great works which begin a new era in oratorio,\textsuperscript{3} the former containing "In Native Worth", an aria which the candidate sang at his recital.

Haydn was familiar with Handel's works when he visited England and was undoubtedly impressed by the enthusiastic reception of Handel's oratorios by the British people. The text of The Creation came from England, based on a poem by John Milton. Handel had earlier considered it but found it too weak dramatically for his liking. Haydn's rendition of the poem was simple, showing a great feeling of nature and an almost childlike piety, which it seemed to require. That it was received with tremendous success seems to testify to this fact.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Lang, p. 526.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Bukofzer, p. 337.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Apel, p. 518.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Lang, p. 634.
\end{itemize}
Felix Mendelssohn.—Though Beethoven attempted oratorio, his works in this field are insignificant beside those of Mendelssohn, who is the next composer to do important work with this medium.¹

Mendelssohn, in his first two oratorios, St. Paul and Elijah, showed the influence of Handel. The latter served as a model for English oratorio for the nineteenth century, and is actually more Classicistic than Romantic in style. This work also displays a "great stylistic purity" and spirituality.² The aria "If With All Your Hearts" was a number from this work performed by the candidate at his recital. The prophet Obadiah makes an urgent plea to the people to seek the Lord.

¹Apel, p. 518.
THE ART SONG

The Nature of the Art Song

The art song, a product of the Romantic period, is unique in that each individual song develops and prescribes its own musical treatment. The composer did not make the text and the music separate, but he discovered a power in music to complement the text. There is no blueprint for the composition of an art song. The music obeys its own laws. There is a new form for each new song to meet the new expressive needs.¹

The Song Prior to 1800

By returning to the fifteenth century and moving toward the lied of the Romantic era, we discover that the song went through many changes and styles. Fifteenth century composers such as von Wolckenstein and von Salzburg were the first to write rather primitive polyphonic songs. Important collections of folksongs of the period reveal both polyphonic and monophonic treatments. Adam von Fulda and Heinrich Finck used true polyphonic imitation. Heinrich Isaac composed fine songs, "Innsbruck ich muss dich lassen" being a good example. Orlando di Lasso wrote songs, using German texts, with great

skill and imagination during the last half of the sixteenth century. The development of the polyphonic lied ended with Johann Hermann Schein. In Germany the accompanied solo-lied made its appearance during the Baroque era through the works of Johann Staden and Thomas Selle. Its development at this point reached its height in the songs of Adam Krieger, who used instrumental ritornello at the end of each stanza. The religious song found its master in the form of Johann Wolfgang Franck toward the end of the seventeenth century. During the first part of the eighteenth century the lied practically ceased to exist, giving way to the elaborate aria. After 1750 Johan Adam Hiller, the founder of the Singspiel, replaced the song of the late Baroque with a fresh, folk like simplicity with a more genuine expression. Others of the Berlin school such as J. F. Reichardt found a new lyricism. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven developed this type of song to its artistic climax.\textsuperscript{1}

Franz Schubert

Franz Schubert, of the Romantic period, stands as the giant of Lied composers. He is universally recognized for having reached heights of artistic perfection. He used devices with the accompaniment, the bass, and the rhythm to lend to the mood and better expression for the words.\textsuperscript{2} His image is so great that those who follow, namely, Schumann,

\textsuperscript{1}Apel, pp. 405-406. \textsuperscript{2}Finney, pp. 431-432.
Brahms and Mendelssohn, are almost hidden. Hugo Wolf is perhaps the only one to mention as having songs worthy of comparison. "Die Neugierige" and "Staendchen" are songs by Schubert sung by the candidate at his recital. Richard Strauss, who composed German songs during the latter part of the nineteenth century, was represented at the candidate's recital with two songs, "Morgen" and "Cacilie".

The French Chanson

The chanson is the French counterpart of the German lied. The emphasis of the lied through most of its long development was on artistic production, while the chanson usually remained an amorous song in the popular vein. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that it became more of an artistic medium. Some of the fine composers of songs to emerge from this era are Ravel, Debussy, Roussel and Faure. Eduard Lalo (d. 1892) was represented at the candidate's recital with his "L'Esclave". Henri Duparc (d. 1922) is one of the most impressive song composers of the group. His sixteen songs are considered to be some of the finest from this period. The candidate included Duparc's "L'Invitation au Voyage" at his recital.

THE MODERN SONG

Influence of Hugo Wolf

According to Lang the modern song reached its limits with Hugo Wolf. Most subsequent song composers turned to him. In many of his songs the instrumental accompaniment dominated the song, but, yet remained subordinate to the text. The piano accompaniment in his songs played a more important role than did the accompaniment in the Schubert type song toward establishing the mood suggested by the text. One might say that his works are "songs for voice and piano". The contemporary song, "The Instruments", by Jean Berger, seems to follow the Wolf pattern quite closely. The accompaniment is sometimes so elaborate that the singer has difficulty following the melodic line. This song was included in the candidate's recital.

The Folk Song Idiom

Many contemporary composers implement folk melodies in their arrangements and compositions. Aaron Copeland used them in his Billy the Kid, and Kurt Weill used them in his opera Down in the Valley. The British composers Ralph Vaughn Williams and Benjamin Britten used folk melodies in their vocal and choral music. Many critics believe that Cyril Scott

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1Lang, pp. 1012-1013.
did his better works in this idiom.¹ Scott's arrangement of the folk song "Lord Randall" was sung by the candidate at his recital.

¹Finney, p. 516.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


