

A CANADIAN OPERA ARIA ANTHOLOGY FOR SOPRANO

by

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Abstract

A problem that Canadian opera faces is that once works are premiered, they rarely receive any further performances. Singers must overcome numerous barriers to sing these works due to limited score accessibility and lack of aria adaptations and recordings. Even if singers feel passionately about Canadian opera, such obstacles may impede their motivation to perform Canadian repertoire.

This thesis aims to increase the awareness and accessibility of Canadian opera through the creation of a “Canadian Opera Aria Anthology for Soprano.” The anthology includes background information about the operas, composer and librettist biographies, opera synopses, and aria adaptations. In addition, performance and interpretive guides have been formed from the author’s own research in performing these works, available recordings, and from information gathered from the author’s interviews with the composers and librettists.

Hopefully the arias within this anthology will not only provide singers with useful arias for auditions, but also give them and their audience a lens through which they may better understand Canadian opera and culture. Ultimately, this research aims to increase the recognition of Canadian opera and to develop a greater interest and appreciation for these works so that one day, they may become a part of the standard operatic repertoire and reach both Canadian and international stages.

Lay Summary

This thesis aims to increase the awareness and accessibility of Canadian opera through the creation of an anthology of Canadian opera arias for soprano voices. It includes background information about the operas, composer and librettist biographies, opera synopses, aria adaptations, and performance and interpretive guides formed from the author's own research in performing these works, available recordings, and from information gathered from the author's interviews with the composers and librettists. The goal of this thesis is to provide singers with useful audition arias and a lens through which they and their audience may better understand Canadian opera and culture. Ultimately, this research aims to increase the recognition of Canadian opera and to develop a greater interest and appreciation for these works so that one day, they may become a part of the standard operatic repertoire and reach both Canadian and international stages.

Preface

This dissertation is the original, unpublished intellectual property of the author, Stephanie Eiko Nakagawa, written under the guidance of professors Dr. David Metzger and Nancy Hermiston.

Author interviews were conducted in accordance with the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, Certificate Number H15-03042, under the supervision of Principal Investigator, Dr. David Metzger. Questionnaires distributed at lecture-recital presentations of this research were covered by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, Certificate Number H16-02793, under the supervision of Principal Investigator, Dr. David Metzger.

The author has created all the score adaptations with appropriate copyright permission from creators and/or publishers, except for “The Blades of Grass” aria, which the composer has given permission to include in this thesis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

Although Canada has a relatively short operatic history in comparison with European countries, it does have a fairly substantial repertoire of operas.¹ Since Joseph Quesnel wrote what many regard as Canada's first opera, *Colas et Colinette* in 1788, Canadian composers and librettists have created over four hundred operas, and the list continues to grow today.²

One issue for Canadian opera is that most works rarely receive additional performance beyond their premieres. As Wayne Gooding has called this, "The Conundrum of Canadian Opera": "the typical fate of Canadian operas is that they disappear, their scores consigned to gather dust, after one (usually) or a scant few (at best) stagings."³ Mary Ingraham, who created a comprehensive list of Canadian opera composed between 1867-2007, points out that "with very few exceptions, Canadian staged dramatic music is not well known even within the sphere of high-culture enthusiasts" and that "lack of performance and promotion opportunities of Canadian operas beyond their premieres has undoubtedly restricted our knowledge of this otherwise rich cultural field."⁴ She also suggests that "[t]he

¹ For a brief summary of opera composition in Canada refer to Stephen C. Willis and Carl Morey, "Opera Composition," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 6 June 2006, last modified 19 November 2014, accessed 15 February 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/opera-composition-emc>.

² *Ibid.* The most thorough list of Canadian operas composed between 1867 and 2007 can be found in: Mary I. Ingraham, "Something to Sing About: A Preliminary List of Canadian Staged Dramatic Music Since 1867," *Intersections* 28, no. 1 (2007): 25-75, accessed 19 January 2017, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/212390393?accountid=14656>. Although limited, The Canadian Music Centre's catalogue also contains some newer works composed since 2007: "Canadian Opera Catalogue," Canadian Music Centre, 1-5, accessed 19 January 2017, <https://www.musiccentre.ca/sheet-music/browse/opera>.

³ Wayne Gooding, "The Conundrum of Canadian Opera," *Opera Canada* 51, no. 1 (Spring, 2010): 4, accessed 19 January 2017, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/304184662?accountid=14656>.

⁴ Ingraham, "Something to Sing About," 21 and 14-15.

first step in rectifying this situation is to build an awareness of the repertoire of Canadian staged dramatic music.”⁵

This thesis aims to increase the awareness and accessibility of Canadian opera through the creation of an opera aria anthology for soprano. Even for singers who feel passionately about Canadian opera and wish to perform it, much of the repertoire is inaccessible. The Canadian Music Centre does have many scores and recordings available for loan or purchase, yet their catalogue remains limited to those composers who have deposited or published their scores there.⁶ Other scores may be available through various publishers; however, buying full scores of operas to perform only one or two arias from these works may become a prohibitive expense for singers.⁷ In many cases, operas remain unpublished and sometimes the only way to track down a score is to contact the composer, the opera company, or someone who may have been a part of the initial production. Once obtaining a score, singers must then sift through the opera to find suitable aria excerpts – that is, if any exist within the work. For those operas published before music notation software came about in the 1990’s, this also means working with hand-written manuscripts.⁸ For many singers, these obstacles may impede their motivation to perform Canadian repertoire.

There is a need for this anthology – a first of its kind for Canadian operatic works – as it makes a wide variety of arias available to sopranos in one publication. The arias within the anthology have been adapted for audition and performance purposes. Where

⁵ Ingraham, “Something to Sing About,” 21.

⁶ “Canadian Opera Catalogue,” Canadian Music Centre.

⁷ Anastasia Tsioulcas, “American Arias Now Available for a Song,” New Music Box, 9 August 2006, accessed 14 January 2017, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/American-Arias-Now-Available-for-a-Song>.

⁸ The most widely used music notation software programs include *Finale* that came out in 1988 and *Sibelius*, which was released in 1993.

applicable, extraneous parts and long instrumental interludes have been omitted in consultation with the composers to create flowing, dramatic pieces that can stand on their own. In addition, handwritten scores such as those of *Deirdre* and *Louis Riel* have been digitalized to increase legibility.

Many North American companies now require singers to perform contemporary English arias for auditions, and singers frequently turn to American and British operas as such scores are more easily accessible.⁹ In particular, two anthological series published in 2004 have made American arias readily available to singers: G. Schirmer's *American Aria Anthology Series* and Boosey and Hawkes' *American Arias: A Collection of Essential Contemporary Works*.¹⁰ Two years after their publication, both series combined sold approximately 20,000 copies, and the soprano and mezzo editions were in such high demand that they received multiple reprints.¹¹ Richard Walters, editor of the *American Aria Anthology* series has observed a promising correlation between the increased accessibility of American arias through these anthologies and an increased performance of the works within them: "I've been a judge for the Metropolitan Opera auditions [...] and I've heard pieces that are included in these anthologies being used in those auditions. That's very heartening."¹²

The "Canadian Opera Aria Anthology for Soprano" aims to increase the accessibility of Canadian opera and to provide singers with new and exciting repertoire choices for

⁹ Tsioulcas, "American Arias Now Available for a Song."

¹⁰ Refer to: Philip Brunelle, ed., *American Arias: Soprano - A Collection of Essential Contemporary Works* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 2004); and Richard Walters, ed., *American Aria Anthology: Soprano* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. 2004).

¹¹ Tsioulcas, "American Arias Now Available for a Song." As of August 2006, the G. Schirmer soprano volume had received two reprints and the mezzo-soprano volume, one reprint. The Boosey & Hawkes' soprano volume had also received one reprint.

¹² *Ibid.*

auditions and performances. In addition, it allows Canadian singers the opportunity to connect with and showcase their own cultural identity in operatic form.

1.2 Opera and Aria Selection

With over four hundred works to choose from, the operas within this anthology have been narrowed down to those produced by Canada's larger opera companies with an operating budget of \$1 million and above.¹³ The greater resources and relatively large-scale productions of these companies increase the amount of archival resources available for research, such as promotional and production materials, reviews, and recordings.

From a list of approximately twenty operas, the selections were further narrowed down based on the availability and suitability of excerpts for auditions and performances. Arias needed to have a compelling dramatic or emotional feature and give singers the opportunity to showcase their vocal prowess. The anthology also had to have a balance of arias with various musical styles and pieces for different voice types and characters. The final criterion for selection was the ability to obtain copyright permission as the anthology needed to include all the scores in order to fulfill the thesis' objective to increase the accessibility of Canadian arias.

1.3 Structure of the Anthology

Several theses have used an anthological approach to increase the awareness and accessibility of other under-represented areas within the operatic repertoire, such as Robert McNichols Jr.'s "Anthology of Opera Arias by African American Composers for Low

¹³ These companies include: Canadian Opera Company, L'Opéra de Montréal, Vancouver Opera, Calgary Opera Association, Edmonton Opera Association, Manitoba Opera, Opéra de Québec, and Opera Lyra Ottawa.

Voice Singers of African Descent” and Larry Wayne Fralick Jr.’s “An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Russian Arias for Tenor: A Guide to Performance.”¹⁴ McNichols’ work focuses on six operas and contains reproductions of the aria scores. Fralick’s research attempts to systematically categorize all Russian tenor arias. It contains International Phonetic Alphabet transcriptions and English translations of the arias, but no scores. Neither thesis, however, gives any in-depth musical analysis or guidance to singers on how to approach the arias. In this anthology, the main discussion focuses on the arias and their interpretation and performance. The surrounding discussion serves to help singers better understand the arias within the context of the operas.

Each of the following chapters focuses on one opera and includes the following information: background and performance history, composer and librettist biographies, cast list, opera synopsis, and when needed, historical background information about the opera’s subject. From each opera, one or two arias have been selected. To help singers determine an aria’s suitability to their own personality and instrument, an overview of each aria is also given with information such as voice type, range, character description, and setting.

All aria scores have been adapted from the original vocal scores in consultation with the composers. (The only exception being the arias from *Deirdre* and *Louis Riel* as the composers have passed away, and the aria from *Mary’s Wedding*, which the composer

¹⁴ Refer to: Robert McNichols Jr., “Anthology of Opera Arias by African American Composers for Low Voice Singers of African Descent” (DMA Diss., University of Kansas, 2013), KUScholarWorks, accessed 19 January 2017, <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/13010>; and Larry Wayne Fralick Jr., “An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Russian Arias for Tenor: A Guide to Performance” (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 1995), ProQuest (304229606), accessed 19 January 2017, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/304229606?accountid=14656>.

himself adapted.) In general, only minor adjustments have been made from the original scores and these changes have been noted in the “Adaptation Notes.”

The “Performance and Interpretative Notes” section of each aria outlines its musical form, discusses character portrayal and various performance approaches, and suggests ways in which singers may tackle challenging musical or vocal passages. These recommendations build upon the author’s own research in performing these arias, available recordings, and from information gathered from the author’s interviews with the composers and librettists. Often times, what a singer sees on the page may not translate to performance as easily as one might assume. Without recordings of previous performances to listen to, it is sometimes difficult to discern what the composer intended or what works best in performance, especially in regards to tempi. The aim of this discussion is to help singers achieve captivating performances of the arias and to bring to life what the composer and librettist envisioned.

A condensed version of this thesis was presented as a lecture recital in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. At the end of each performance, anonymous questionnaires were given to audience members asking their thoughts about the arias, what information they had found useful, and if they had any suggestions that would benefit singers’ use of the anthology. Data gathered from these questionnaires has been used to streamline the anthology and increase its functionality and efficiency.

2. *DEIRDRE*

2.1 Background

As part of their *Ballad Opera Series*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned librettist, John Coulter and composer, Healey Willan to write a short, one-hour “radio opera.”¹⁵ Written during WWII, the resulting work, *Transit Through Fire* tells a contemporary story “about young Canadians who, through [the] war, integrated themselves into the very community that had dispossessed them in the [D]epression.”¹⁶ The opera was broadcast on CBC Radio on 8 March 1942 and due to its success, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned a second piece from Willan and Coulter in 1943. This time, the pair created a full-length radio opera entitled *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

In 1944, two years prior to the opera’s premiere, The Macmillan Company of Canada published the libretto of *Deirdre of the Sorrows* so listeners could familiarize themselves with its story – a “Gaelic, pre-Christian saga of the Irish Druids, *Tales of the Red Branch Knights of Ulster*.”¹⁷ Coulter felt this would allow audiences to better understand “the composer’s problems and the references of his music.”¹⁸ *Deirdre of the Sorrows* received its CBC Radio premiere on 20 April 1946 and became the first full-length opera written in Canada.¹⁹

Over the next twenty years, Willan and Coulter made numerous revisions to the opera in order to create a more musically and dramatically cohesive work. For example, for

¹⁵ Dorith Rachel Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto: A Study of Performance Traditions and Repertoire 1783-1980” (PhD diss. University of Toronto, 1983), 1090, accessed 8 October 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/24930>.

¹⁶ Geraldine Anthony, *John Coulter* (Nova Scotia, Halifax: G. K. Hall & Co., 1976), 108.

¹⁷ “Deirdre,” *Opera Canada* 7, no. 3 (September 1966): 31.

¹⁸ John Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows: An Ancient and Noble Tale Retold by John Coulter for Music by Healey Willan* (Toronto, The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1944), x.

¹⁹ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1091.

the opera's second radio performance on 10 October 1951 by the CBC Opera Company (founded in 1948), Willan changed most of the Bard's sung narration to spoken text. This allowed Willan to shorten the duration of the narration yet maintain its necessary function of describing each scene.²⁰ Then from 1962 to 1964, Coulter and Willan revised the opera in order to adapt it to the conditions of a stage production. Now entitled *Deirdre*, this new staged version of the opera premiered on 2 April 1965 by The Royal Conservatory Opera School at the MacMillan Theatre (Edward Johnson Building) in Toronto.²¹

For this version, Willan and Coulter completely removed the role of the bard for it had become redundant with the work's visual presentation. Coulter also trimmed down approximately two-thirds of his original libretto in order to enhance the work's dramatic flow as he describes in the following:

Economy of words. That is possibly the most essential characteristic of good libretto-writing. [...] In *Deirdre* words have been ruthlessly sheared away to the absolute minimum needed to move the story forward. No deviation from the direct dramatic line remains. [...] A massacre! But it worked, triumphantly on stage. The fly-wheel started turning at once, quickly picked up momentum and whirled both action and audience on to the final curtain, without once losing tension or the ever-mounting sense of imminent doom.²²

Due to the cuts in the libretto and the need for scene changes, Willan had to compose new music in order to obtain seamless transitions. As he points out: "That's where workmanship comes in. The joins [or transitions] have got to be clean. If I have done my work properly, you shouldn't be aware of the joins, and the musical fabric should hold together harmoniously and flow smoothly."²³ In the end, Willan and Coulter's efforts to create a more concise opera achieved great success. The Royal Conservatory Opera School

²⁰ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1114.

²¹ "Deirdre," *Opera Canada*, 31.

²² John Coulter, "Words for Music," *Opera Canada* Souvenir Issue 6, no. 3 (September 1965): 75.

²³ "Deirdre," *Opera Canada*, 31.

sold out both of its *Deirdre* performances and had to add a third show due to an overwhelming demand for tickets.²⁴

The following year, the Canadian Opera Company mounted *Deirdre* on 24, 29 September and 4 October 1966 at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre with supporting grants from the Ontario Arts Council (\$20,000) and the Canada Council (\$30,000).²⁵ CBC Radio broadcasted one of these performances on its "Tuesday Night" series on 11 October 1966.²⁶ For this production, Willan and Coulter made only minor adjustments to the score. The resulting work represents their final version of the opera, which was published by Berandol Music as a vocal score in 1972. This version will be used as the basis for discussion in the following text.²⁷

Deirdre's performances at the O'Keefe Centre received standing ovations and did well at the box office with its three shows filled to eighty-percent capacity.²⁸ Most reviewers felt that the numerous revisions *Deirdre* received over the years served to strengthen the work overall with increased cohesiveness and efficiency. As F. R. C. Clarke points out: "The pruning and altering of the radio version vastly improved the score dramatically and musically. The radio version had been overly long and somewhat tedious; the tightening necessary to produce the stage versions has resulted in a fine opera."²⁹ Some reviewers, however, felt that the abbreviated libretto lost some of its literary eloquence

²⁴ William Edward Marwick, "The Sacred Choral Music of Healey Willan" (PhD diss. Michigan State University, 1970), 49, ProQuest (302512426), accessed 23 October 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/302512426?accountid=14656>.

²⁵ *The Globe and Mail*, "Canadian Opera Gets \$60,000 from Council," 22 June 1966, accessed 6 November 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1270675870?accountid=14656>; and Carl Morey and Ezra Schabas, *Opera Viva: The Canadian Opera Company The First Fifty Years* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2000), 82.

²⁶ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1092-1093.

²⁷ Healey Willan and John Coulter, *Deirdre: An Opera in Three Acts*, vocal score (Scarborough, Ontario: Berandol Music Limited, 1972).

²⁸ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1181-1182.

²⁹ F. R. C. Clarke, *Healey Willan: Life and Music* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 131.

and obscured the characters' conflicts and motivations.³⁰ Yet Coulter points out that although the cuts to the original libretto detract from the piece as a literary work, the remaining words create a better libretto:

[...] whatever virtue the longer, earlier version may have had as a piece of writing, as dramatic literature – the shortened, stage version has almost none at all. It is skeletal. Functional. Bereft of literary bloom. A mere verbal armature to support the music. And I see now, *that is* what words for music should be. *Deirdre* has lost a lot of the lyric quality of *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. But it is a much better – indeed in some ways I think it may be an exemplary – libretto.³¹

Despite the opera's long and arduous journey of revisions, Dorith Cooper points out that *Deirdre* represents a "necessary link in the historical chain of operatic endeavour in Canada [...] [and] an intriguing test case in the art of writing and producing opera in Canada. [...] it provided a much needed 'role model' for Canadian composers at work in the field of opera."³² Since its Canadian Opera Company performances, *Deirdre* has received productions at the Banff Festival of the Arts (1972) and at Toronto's Opera In Concert (1997).³³ In regards to Canada's operatic history, *Deirdre* holds great significance because not only is it the first full-length opera written in Canada but it is also the first full-length Canadian opera to receive a staged production and the first Canadian opera to be produced by the Canadian Opera Company.³⁴

³⁰ Anthony, *John Coulter*, 116-117, and Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1176-1177.

³¹ Coulter, "Words for Music," 75.

³² Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1182.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1093, and Warren Wilson, "Healey Willan's *Deirdre* Flawed but Fascinating," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 October 1997, accessed 23 October 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1143660611?accountid=14656>.

³⁴ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1092.

2.1.1 Librettist: John Coulter

John William Coulter (1888-1980) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland.³⁵ He spent much of his career in Ireland and London working various freelance jobs, such as a writer for BBC London (1925), *The Belfast Telegraph*, *Ireland Saturday Night*, and the *Northern Whig*, as well as editor of *The Ulster Review* (1925-1926) and *The New Adelphi*. In 1936, he married Canadian poet and short story writer Olive Claire Primrose and moved to Canada where he was already well known to Canadian audiences through his BBC programs.

Coulter spent the rest of his life in Canada with brief hiatuses in New York (1939-1941) and England (1951-1957). Over the next forty years, he contributed works to CBC Radio as well as to numerous newspapers, journals, and publications. He also wrote many award-winning plays, including *The House in the Quiet Glen* (1935), which won all but one of the awards given out at the 1937 Dominion Drama Festival in Toronto.³⁶

Often referred to as “The Dean of Canadian Playwrights,” Coulter made great contributions to Canada’s artistic scene by helping to found the Canada Council of the Arts, serving as Chairman of Toronto’s Drama Committee of the Arts and Letters Club, and sitting on the editorial board of *The Canadian Review of Music and Art*. Back when he lived in Ireland, Coulter had aspired to create an Ulster Theatre, but political instability there forced him to give up these hopes.³⁷ In Canada, he had “a firm-set wish to establish a national theater [...] to encourage young Canadian writers to create Canadian plays giving identity to the Canadian people.”³⁸ Although his dreams did not get fully realized, his efforts

³⁵ The following biographical information has been summarized from “John Coulter’s Triple Heritage,” in Anthony, *John Coulter*, 19-34.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

resulted in the establishment of the National Arts Centre's National Theater School in Ottawa and Ontario's Stratford Shakespearean Festival in 1951 for "both the presentation of plays and the education of young Canadian actors."³⁹

Coulter's output includes twenty-four plays, a novel, two opera libretti, nine short stories, a book of poetry, a memoir, and countless works for journals, papers, and radio programs.⁴⁰ His play *Riel* has become one of his best-known pieces and critics have hailed it as Canada's "first great historical drama."⁴¹ In 1950, Toronto's New Play Society premiered the work with Mavor Moore in the title role. Moore later went on to write the libretto for his opera, *Louis Riel* based on this experience. In 1960, the Canada Council commissioned Coulter to write two more plays to create a Riel trilogy: *The Trial of Louis Riel* (1967) and *The Crime of Louis Riel* (1976).⁴² *The Trial of Louis Riel* was partially commissioned by The Regina Chamber of Commerce for performance in a mock trial room at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Regina. Since its 1967 premiere, the play has continued its performance every summer and is now North America's longest running historical dramatic theatrical production.⁴³ With his Riel trilogy, Coulter "discovered Riel's significance in the life of Canada, [...] revealed his heroic dimensions as a national hero, [...] and] generated a new pride in Canadian history."⁴⁴

So why did Coulter write Canada's first full-length opera on an ancient Gaelic legend instead of on a Canadian subject? In his preface to the libretto, Coulter explains that he and Willan felt they had already addressed the Canadian "contemporary scene" with their first

³⁹ Anthony, *John Coulter*, 31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ "The Trial of Louis Riel," Rielco Productions Inc., accessed 21 November 2016, <http://rielcoproductions.com>.

⁴⁴ Anthony, *John Coulter*, 61.

opera and not wishing to compete or repeat themselves, they chose a subject “far removed from the contemporary.”⁴⁵ With their second opera, they hoped to give the audience relief from the troubles of the War with the “consolation of music and song and story set free from the encumbrance of what is controversial [...] [with] no hampering reference to any kind of feud or schism, political, religious, contemporary or of the past.”⁴⁶ To that end, Coulter and Willan, both of Irish heritage, turned to the *Tales of the Red Branch Knights of Ulster* whose “immemorial myths and legends [...] have come down from eras beyond recorded time.”⁴⁷ Coulter felt a deep connection to these stories and remarked: “they are of my blood and of the marrow of my bones. I was born and reared in the country where their scenes are laid.”⁴⁸ In particular, Deirdre’s story attracted him “with its strange exciting mixture of tenderness and savagery,” and he thought it “susceptible of operatic treatment as the legends around which Wagner evoked his vast sombrely-coloured phantasmagorias of dramatic sound.”⁴⁹

Coulter also took inspiration from ancient European traditions because he felt that Canada in the 1940’s was still at the beginning stages of developing its own “national idiom.” He believed that Canada’s creative arts still had to rely on its “old world heritage”:

In countries such as Canada, still in process of colonization by immigrants from various stocks in the old world, a national idiom in the arts can hardly be more than emergent. Music and poetry and painting must speak, as yet, in old world voices. In the slow passage of centuries these many voices may at last merge in a Canadian dialect of the universal language of art. But meanwhile, and apart from merely geographic nuances of subject-matter, the art of a Canadian remains, with but little differentiation, the art of the country of his forbears, and the old world heritage of myth and legend

⁴⁵ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, viii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, viii and ix.

remains his heritage, to be used by him for suitable ends, though the desk on which he write be a Canadian desk in a Canadian house, and though his work be designated Canadian.⁵⁰

Coulter also points out that the ancient world brought to life in *Deirdre* still exists in the United Kingdom today and how many Canadians share this same ancestry:

The ecclesiastical capital of Ulster (Northern Ireland) and of all Ireland is still Armagh, formerly Ard-Macha, Navan Fort, the Avan Macha of the following pages. Ulster was formerly called Ullidia, or Ullah, the Ullah of these pages. Scotland was Alban or Alba, the Alba of these pages. And there, on that green and rocky shoulder of the antique world, the Scotians lived, the forebears from whose loins has come, in latter years, a potent strain among the stock of immigrants, Canadian and American; strain of how many noted pioneers, how many Presidents and Prime Ministers?⁵¹

Therefore, despite the opera's seemingly remote connection to Canada, Coulter felt that Canadian audiences would find some connection to *Deirdre's* story through their own heritage or, at the very least, some form of psychological and emotional escape through the story's legendary setting.

2.1.2 Composer: Healey Willan

James Healey Willan (1880-1968), born in England, began his musical education at the St. Saviour's Choir School in Eastbourne (1888-1895).⁵² Once his voice broke, he left the school but continued to study the organ and became the youngest Fellow in the history of the Royal College of Organists (1899).⁵³ Willan participated in a great variety of musical

⁵⁰ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, vii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁵² The following biographical information has been gathered from: Giles Bryant, "Willan, Healey," in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 7 October 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30330>; Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 3-88; Jeremy Phillips Greenhouse, "The Songs of Healey Willan: A Stylistic Overview" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1993), 5-14; and William Jonathan Michael Renwick, "The Contrapuntal Style of Healey Willan" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1982), 1-25, *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations (1919-2007)*, accessed 26 February 2017, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/831/items/1.0095310>.

⁵³ Greenhouse, "The Songs of Healey Willan," 6.

endeavours at the beginning of his career in London, such as proofreading music for Novello & Company, serving as organist and choirmaster for several churches, and conducting the Wanstead Choral Society. He also joined the London Gregorian Association in 1910 and assisted in the organization of Gregorian Festivals at St. Paul's Cathedral.

In 1913, Willan and his family moved to Canada upon his acceptance of a more lucrative position as Head of Music Theory at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto (1913-1936). To supplement his income, he also worked as an organist at St. Paul's Anglican Church and as a music theory lecturer at the University of Toronto (1914). Willan kept busy throughout his career, serving as vice-principal of the Royal Conservatory of Music (1920-1936), music director of the Hart House Theatre (1919-1925), professor (1938-1950) and university organist (1932-1964) at the University of Toronto, composer for the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, founder of the Tudor Singers (1934-1939), and precentor at St. Mary Magdalene Church (1921-1968). His students include many well-known Canadian composers such as Louis Applebaum, John Beckwith, Walter MacNutt, Godfrey Ridout, and John Weinzweig.⁵⁴

Willan made great contributions to the development of Canadian music and has often been referred to as the "Dean of Canadian Composers."⁵⁵ He became an inaugural Companion of the Order of Canada (1967) and received the Canada Council Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts (1961), the Lambeth Doctorate from the Archbishop of Canterbury (Mus D. Cantaur, 1956), and honorary doctorates from the University of Toronto (1920), Queen's University (1953), University of Manitoba (1954), and McMaster

⁵⁴ Renwick, "The Contrapuntal Style of Healey Willan," 17.

⁵⁵ Rita Steblin, "Healey Willan's Inscribed Copy of John Coulter's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*," *Canadian University Music Review* 12, no. 1 (1992): 117, accessed 12 November 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/212370661?accountid=14656>.

University (1962). He was also made an honorary member of the Canadian League of Composers (1955) and a Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music (1963) and the Royal Hamilton College of Music (1965).

Throughout his career, Willan received numerous commissions from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as well as from publishers such as The Frederick Harris Music Company, Concordia, and C. F. Peters Corporation. His compositions for the latter two publishers consist mostly of liturgical pieces.⁵⁶ Willan is best known for his organ and sacred choral works, and in 1952, he gave a command performance of one of his most famous choral works, *An Apostrophe to the Heavenly Hosts* for Princess Elizabeth II. He also composed the homage anthem, *O Lord, our Governor* for performance at her coronation a year later.⁵⁷

Willan's output spans a wide variety of genres and includes two symphonies, a piano concerto, two radio operas, six ballad operas, a dramatic cantata, incidental music, folks-song arrangements, partsongs, and over two hundred vocal songs.⁵⁸ His ballad operas consist of *The Beggar's Opera*, *L'Ordre de Bon Temps*, *Prince Charlie and Flora*, *The Ayrshire Ploughman*, *Maureen*, and *Indian Christmas Play*.⁵⁹

Of all his compositions, Willan always considered *Deirdre* his "finest" work.⁶⁰ However, many opera critics criticized his style as being "out-dated." Especially since the upcoming generation of composers – such as John Cage (1912-1992) – were pushing the limits of musical experimentation with their avant-garde styles.⁶¹ Despite these views,

⁵⁶ Renwick, "The Contrapuntal Style of Healey Willan," 12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁸ Greenhouse, "The Songs of Healey Willan," 2.

⁵⁹ Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 154. Scores for *Maureen* and *Indian Christmas Play* have been lost.

⁶⁰ Renwick, "The Contrapuntal Style of Healey Willan," 15.

⁶¹ Greenhouse, "The Songs of Healey Willan," 4.

Willan remained adamant that “modern techniques should add to the established traditions in a meaningful way, rather than completely superceding them.”⁶² As conductor Ettore Mazzoleni points out, *Deirdre* “neither is nor pretends to be modern opera.”⁶³ Now over fifty years since *Deirdre*’s performance at the Canadian Opera Company, these criticisms regarding Willan’s stylistic modernity hold little importance in the evaluation of his music.

Stylistically, *Deirdre* belongs to the “turn of the century” and since Willan proclaimed himself “an ardent Wagnerian,” it also demonstrates a heavy influence of Wagner.⁶⁴ In fact, the Canadian Opera Company put *Deirdre* in their season in place of a Wagnerian opera.⁶⁵ In 1947, Willan wrote to Coulter:

I still think that the Wagnerian Music Dramas are supreme and ideal. Probably I am getting old and crotchety. Opera, to my way of thinking, should be the idealization of some tremendous emotion, or group of emotions, and should utilize in its production all the elements of voice, colour, movement and music.⁶⁶

In *Deirdre*, Willan maintains his own sense of style while incorporating Wagnerian elements, particularly the use of the *leitmotif*.⁶⁷ Carl Morey claims: “Dramatically and musically *Deirdre* is a Wagnerian opera, yet with a character distinctively its own.”⁶⁸ In the

⁶² Renwick, “The Contrapuntal Style of Healey Willan,” 23.

⁶³ John Kraglund, “Willan’s *Deirdre* was Born 40 Years Late,” *The Globe and Mail*, 22 September 1966, accessed 10 November 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1270499980?accountid=14656>.

⁶⁴ F. R. C. Clarke, “Deirdre,” in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 7 October 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/0011422>; and Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 134. Healey Willan quoted from Healey Willan and John Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Tuesday Night” Broadcast, 11 October 1966, Canadian Opera Company, conducted by Ettore Mazzoleni, O’Keefe Centre, Toronto, Track 2, accessed 12 November 2016, Canadian Music Centre Centrestreams, https://www.musiccentre.ca/centrestreams/swf?mode=play_by&opt=composer&id=2037.

⁶⁵ Marwick, “The Sacred Choral Music of Healey Willan,” 49.

⁶⁶ Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 133

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Carl Morey, “Deirdre,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 21 August 2006, last modified 14 December 2013, accessed 9 October 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/deirdre-emc>.

following, Willan passionately explains his view of *leitmotifs* and his reasoning for their use in *Deirdre*:

I feel disposed to add here that I believe strongly in the leitmotif principle of operatic writing, the principle which admits of a definite theme or progression of chords connected with a person or an event. I am fully aware of the fact that this is considered old fashioned and effete by some intelligentsia, as they are pleased to dub themselves, and even Ernest Newman referred to it as a system in which each character presented his visiting card before venturing to sing his or her part. But in spite of this, I am of the opinion that the scheme laid out in such colossal proportions and with such consummate artistry by Wagner will live and be a vital force in opera long after his detractors are dead, buried and forgotten.⁶⁹

Willan left no definitive guide to the *leitmotifs* in *Deirdre* and while Clarke references only a “handful” of motives, Cooper outlines twenty-six.⁷⁰ Despite these differences, both Cooper and Clarke point out “Deirdre’s Motive” (Section 2.4.2, Ex. 3), which Willan “use[s] more extensively than any other and [which] is subject to ingenious variation – melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic.”⁷¹ Willan incorporates the motive into almost every scene, intertwining it with other motives to show how Deirdre occupies the other characters’ thoughts.⁷² (Refer to Sections 2.4.2 and 2.5.2.)

In *Deirdre*, Willan also emulates Wagner’s large, dense orchestration that may at times pose a challenge for performers. (Refer to Section 2.4.1: Voice Type). Leading up to the Canadian Opera Company’s performance, Mazzoleni describes how the heavy orchestration tended to overwhelm the singers’ voices and text:

⁶⁹ Healey Willan and John Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Wednesday Night” Broadcast, 10 October 1951, CBC Opera Company and Chorus, conducted by Geoffrey Waddington, Canadian Music Centre Centrestreams, Track 1, accessed 4 November 2016, https://www.musiccentre.ca/centrestreams/swf?mode=play_by&opt=id&id=1107.

⁷⁰ Steblin, “Healey Willan’s Inscribed Copy of John Coulter’s *Deirdre of the Sorrows*,” 119.

⁷¹ Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 126-127. For more information on “Deirdre’s Motive,” refer to Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1121 (Ex. 3); and Clarke, *Healey Willan*, Ex. 107.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1109.

Now our main problems are musical ones trying to keep Willan's lush orchestration from obscuring the vocal line [...] [*Deirdre's*] style is admittedly Wagnerian despite distinctive Willan characteristics and no obvious borrowings from Wagner scores. But one really needs a version of the Bayreuth covered pit to give the orchestra's instrumentalists an opportunity do full justice to the score. The orchestra is almost always playing, but has to be restrained in all but the interludes. Ideally, perhaps, the singers should be treated as instrumentalists and the audience should just read the text to what would, in effect, be a huge symphonic poem. But I don't think that suggestion would be appreciated by any of the participants. Certainly, one cannot ignore the text, for Willan has an absolute genius for translating even the subtlest shades of meaning into music.⁷³

In addition to these Wagnerian elements, Willan also incorporates some stylistic features of English music with "deliberately archaic qualities" such as "parallel chord progressions (including fauxbourdon – a device favoured by Willan), flexible rhythms of intermingled duplets and triplets, and modal harmonies and melodies."⁷⁴ An example of this can be heard in *Deirdre's* first aria built on a folk-like, Celtic sounding theme (Section 2.4.2, Ex. 4).

As a composer of the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England, Willan paid close attention to the text's rhythmic patterns and inflections.⁷⁵ In his vocal songs, he favours natural word inflection over melodicism and writes musically scenic accompaniments that complement the text:

Song should be idealized speech. A melody, in the ordinary acceptance of the word meaning a tune, is not the most appropriate form for a song, but the natural accent of the words should be given their normal accent in the voice part somewhat after the manner of recitative, while the accompaniment furnishes an emotional or atmospheric background.⁷⁶

⁷³ Kraglund, "Willan's *Deirdre* was Born 40 Years Late."

⁷⁴ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1111 and 1110.

⁷⁵ Marwick, "The Sacred Choral Music of Healey Willan," 49.

⁷⁶ Greenhouse, "The Songs of Healey Willan," 110.

When creating their first opera together, Willan had Coulter read the text over and over to him because, as he said: “I compose on plain chant and I want to hear your stresses.”⁷⁷ In *Deirdre*, Willan was “devoted, note by note, to expressing the ideas and emotions of the opera.”⁷⁸ For example, in *Deirdre*’s arias, the vocal line flows in an arioso style accompanied by a background of *tremolo* chords that allow the singer to freely add *rubato* and expressively delineate the text (Ex. 2, also refer to Sections 2.4.2 and 2.5.2). Overall in *Deirdre*, Willan aimed to write music that would enhance the expression of the words as he believed that “setting words to music should be a matter of providing the musical vehicle for a better understanding of the words, and if possible, making the words still more eloquent.”⁷⁹

2.2 List of Lead Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Canadian Opera Company production of *Deirdre* that premiered on 24 September 1966.⁸⁰

Cathva, Druid High Priest (Bass)	Howell Glynn
Conochar, High King of Ullah (Baritone)	Bernard Turgeon
Fergus, ex-High King of Ullah and Conochar’s step-father (Bass)	Oskar Raulfs
Levercham, <i>Deirdre</i> ’s nurse (Contralto)	Patricia Rideout
<i>Deirdre</i> , a foundling girl and Conochar’s ward (Soprano)	Jeannette Zarou
Three Princes of Ullah and Sons of Usnagh:	

⁷⁷ Anthony, *John Coulter*, 108.

⁷⁸ Pearl McCarthy, “Thrilling Music Features First Full-Length Canadian Opera,” *The Globe and Mail*, 20 April 1946, accessed 12 November 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1291165750?accountid=14656>.

⁷⁹ Healey Willan quoted from Healey Willan and John Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Tuesday Night” Broadcast, 1966, Track 2.

⁸⁰ The following cast list has been gathered from: “*Deirdre*,” *Opera Canada*, 30; and Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, “The Persons.”

Naisi (Tenor)

Gianni Savelli

Ardan (Baritone)

Richard Braun

Ainnle (Tenor)

Thomas Park

Conductor: Dr. Ettore Mazzoleni

Director: Herman Geiger-Torel

2.3 Synopsis

2.3.1 Tales of the Red Branch Knights of Ulster

The Ulster Cycle consists of ancient, mythological Irish Gaelic legends set in Ulster (Northern Ireland) in the first century BCE.⁸¹ The Ulster people composed these stories in the eighth or ninth century and passed them on orally until they were transcribed in manuscripts such as *The Book of Dun Cow* (c. 1100) and *The Book of Leinster* (c. 1160). Most of these legends focus on King Conchobar Mac Nessa (referred to in *Deirdre as Conochar*) for whom The Red Branch Knights served. Conchobar ruled at Emain Mach (Evan Macha, near what is now the city of Armagh).

Twentieth-century Anglo-Irish writers such as John Millington Synge (1871-1909) and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) took special interest in the tale of *The Fate of the Sons of Usnech* and created their own dramatizations of Deirdre and Noíse's (Naisi) tragic love story. Greatly admiring these writers, Coulter decided to create his own version of Deirdre's story and originally wrote it as a radio play, *Conochar's Queen* (1941) with incidental music by Willan.⁸²

⁸¹ The following information has been gathered from *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Ulster Cycle," accessed 23 October 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ubc/detail.action?docID=10270741>.

⁸² Morey, "Deirdre."

2.3.2 Opera Synopsis

According to a druid prophecy, Deirdre, a foundling girl (an infant or small abandoned child) is “fated to bring destruction to all men who love her.”⁸³ Conochar raises her as his ward and hides her in seclusion, declaring that any man who lays eyes upon her will be killed. Deirdre grows up to be a beautiful woman and Conochar, who spent his life focused on accumulating his wealth, suddenly realizes her extraordinary beauty.⁸⁴ He becomes obsessed with making her his queen even though the druids condemn their union.

Act 1, Scene 1: In the forest by Conochar’s Red Branch House at Avan Macha, Cathva and the other druid priests perform a mystical ceremony to pray for safety from the prophesized doom.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Fergus and Conochar look on from a distance. Conochar knows that the priests are trying to prevent him from being with Deirdre and despite Fergus’ warning, he orders his fighters to bring Cathva and his priests to him. The soldiers violently force the priests to obey and Conochar raises his sword against Cathva. Outraged, Cathva curses Conochar:

I speak the curse of the High Gods upon you. Now and always, the gods forbid you that one prize your heart desires above else. Seven years of fret and loneliness, and no queen sitting beside you on the throne of Ullah. An empty throne beside you; and empty bridal bed; and at the end a flaming desolation that will leave your kingdom nothing but a tragic name forever.⁸⁶

Conochar flippantly laughs at Cathva’s curse. He orders a marriage feast and pronounces that he will wed Deirdre before the moon has waned.

⁸³ “Deirdre,” *Opera Canada*, 31.

⁸⁴ John Coulter’s introductory talk in Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Tuesday Night” Broadcast, 1966, Track 1.

⁸⁵ The following synopsis has been gathered from Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score.

⁸⁶ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 11-13 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 152-173).

Act 1, Scene 2: In a timber house on Fuah mountain, Levercham and the other women busy themselves with their handiwork while they anxiously await Deirdre's return from the forest. Deirdre approaches as dusk sets in around them, singing joyfully of her encounter with Naisi. Levercham can tell Deirdre is keeping a secret from her and demands to know what it is. Deirdre finally gives in and announces that she and Naisi are betrothed. At hearing his name, Levercham is filled with fear because of the druid prophecy that foreshadows doom for Deirdre and the Sons of Usnagh. Lost in her own happiness, Deirdre takes no heed of Levercham's warnings.

Act 1, Scene 3: The sun rises in a rocky place near the woods of Fuah where the Usnagh brothers have set up camp. Naisi has had a sleepless night thinking about his exciting encounter with Deirdre. His brothers try to stop him from going back to the woods because it is forbidden by the penalty of death and full of Conochar's spies. When Naisi pulls his sword out against them, they realize that he has fallen under Deirdre's spell. Naisi leaves, proclaiming that he will wed Deirdre "before this moon has waived in spite of Conochar."⁸⁷

Act 2, Scene 1: In twilight, Naisi and Deirdre reunite in a little clearing in the woods of Fuah. The birds suddenly go quiet and Deirdre fears that Conochar's spies have found them. Too excited to heed any danger, Naisi tries to calm her down. He asks her to leave with him right away but she refuses knowing that Conochar fighters will trap them. Naisi then decides that he and his brothers will come to fetch Deirdre tomorrow after they have prepared for the long journey to Alba. Levercham calls out Deirdre's name and Naisi slips away.

⁸⁷ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score 49 (Act 1, Scene 3: mm. 692-694).

Conochar arrives with Levercham. He presents Deirdre with a lavish golden torque and describes how all his people will revere her as his queen. Deirdre throws down the torque and declares that she has no wish to marry him for she is already betrothed to Naisi. Outraged, Conochar proclaims that tomorrow she will accompany him to Avan Macha and that Naisi will be dealt with sharply. He orders her to return home and sets his fighters to guard the house.

Act 2, Scene 2: Conochar's fighters have surrounded Deirdre's home so Levercham devises a plan to help Deirdre escape. She leaves to seek out her allies within Conochar's men while Deirdre hastily packs for her journey. Levercham finally returns having secured Deirdre safe passage and tells her to meet Naisi at Hazel Grove. The two bid each other farewell then Deirdre slips quietly out of the house.

A fighter bangs on the door and demands to know where Deirdre is. Levercham says he is too late. Conochar arrives and realizes that Levercham has betrayed him. He orders his men to search for Deirdre and proclaims that he will not rest until she is his queen and until the Sons of Usnagh hang from the gallows.

Act 3, Scene 1: Seven years have passed since Deirdre's escape and Conochar, with great bitterness, has never stopped searching for her. At his home in Avan Macha, he plays a solitary game of chess when a spy arrives to tell him that he has seen Deirdre and the Sons of Usnagh in Alba (Scotland). The brothers greatly miss the hills of Ullah (Ireland) and desperately wish to come home. The spy suggests that they would return despite Deirdre's protests if Conochar invited them back with a pardon. Conochar devises a plan to trick the Usnagh brothers and sends Fergus, who is oblivious to Conochar's scheming, to deliver the

message. Alone, Conochar revels in the fact that he will soon marry Deirdre and prove Cathva wrong.

Act 3, Scene 2: In a rocky place by the sea, the Usnagh brothers and Deirdre have decided to head back to Ullah with Fergus. Ardan and Naisi are ecstatic but Ainnle senses Deirdre's apprehension and fears that danger lies ahead. Aware of Conochar's malice, Deirdre tries to convince Naisi to stay in Alba but he refuses to listen. Deirdre laments knowing that her days with Naisi are coming to an end and that only doom awaits them.

Act 3, Scene 3: In the woods near the Red Branch House, Levercham follows Conochar's orders to prepare "a damp and dirty shelter" for the Sons of Usnagh to sleep.⁸⁸ Meanwhile at his house, Conochar has been dressing himself in his best robes and jewels. He tells his fighters to meet the Usnagh brothers on the beach, armed and ready for battle, but forbids them to take first action so as not to break his oath of safe passage. He also orders his soldiers to escort Deirdre back to the Red Branch House and to leave Naisi and his brothers on the beach until summoned. By forcing Deirdre and Naisi apart, Conochar knows that Naisi will initiate a fight and free him from any blame.

Act 3, Scene 4: Deirdre, Fergus, and the Usnagh brothers arrive on the shores of Ullah where they quickly realize Conochar's deception. As his fighters surround them with spears, Deirdre asks Naisi for his knife so that if needed, rather than fall into Conochar's hands she can use it to kill herself. The fighters demand that Deirdre go alone to meet Conochar but Naisi instead tells her to run to Levercham. As Conochar predicted, Naisi and the Usnagh brothers begin to battle outnumbered against his fighters.

⁸⁸ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 126 (Act 3, Scene 3: m. 471).

Levercham tries to comfort Deirdre as the men fight in the distance, but one by one, they hear that the Usnagh brothers have been killed. When Deirdre finds out that Naisi has died, she kills herself to defy Conochar and rest eternally with Naisi.

Conochar arrives and sees that Deirdre has died. Beside himself with grief, he takes no heed of his palace, which has been lit afire by the Druids. In the end, it is Cathva who has the last word: "The gods have spoken."⁸⁹

2.4 "Deirdre's Song"

2.4.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: As mentioned earlier, *Deirdre* "demands Wagnerian forces vocally and orchestrally."⁹⁰ Therefore, the role of Deirdre requires a sizeable voice, such as a full lyric or dramatic soprano with the power to cut through Willan's thick orchestration in the lower vocal register. Singers also need to have a youthful quality to their sound in order to portray Deirdre's naiveté.

Although Deirdre does not sing any long coloratura passages or high notes (A5 is her highest note in the opera), the role does require beautiful lyricism and good breath control. The vocal line within the arias sits quite high in the tessitura and singers may find this tiring on the voice.⁹¹ In order to prevent excess tension and from having the arias feel like they are plodding on from beat-to-beat, singers need to carefully plan on where to add *rubato*. (See Section 2.4.2 and 2.5.2 for tempi suggestions.)

Range: G4-A5

⁸⁹ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 162 (Act 3, Scene 4: mm. 846-848).

⁹⁰ Wilson, "Healey Willan's *Deirdre* Flawed but Fascinating."

⁹¹ Dorith Cooper, "Celtic Tragedy, Canadian Style," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 October 1997, accessed 11 November 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1140664609?accountid=14656>.

Character: Most likely a teenager or young adult, Deirdre has lived her whole life sheltered from the world. Her naiveté and immaturity sometimes cause her to act impetuously and without regard to consequences. For example, before thinking through how Conochar would take his revenge, she rejects him and proclaims her betrothal to Naisi. On the other hand, Deirdre also shows great determination and bravery. When Naisi dies, she fearlessly faces death, singing: “And now I will be quiet and lift up my head to meet the end is coming, in a way fitting for a queen.”⁹²

Portraying a mythical character such as Deirdre may seem challenging to embody realistically because this type of character often seems quite flat. Cooper remarks that “the main characters [in *Deirdre*], at times, appear to resemble legendary figures posing for posterity.”⁹³ We see very little of Deirdre’s character development. This may have resulted from Coulter’s large cuts to the libretto, which Cooper suggests obscure the characters’ development and motivation.⁹⁴ Regardless, singers should read Coulter’s original published libretto in order to gain a full understanding of Deirdre’s character. The following discussion highlights pertinent information in the omitted texts that singers may find useful in their portrayal of Deirdre’s character.

In Act 2, Scene 1, Coulter cut about twenty-five percent of Deirdre and Naisi’s love duet. He mostly omitted the section in which Deirdre lets go of her fear of Conochar’s approaching troops and allows herself to dream about a future with Naisi:

And yet, oh, Naisi, soon I will be with you, to be always at your side, hunting the hills or spearing fish where the slow waters slip out to the sea, or in a

⁹² Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 139 (Act 3, Scene 4: mm. 615-621).

⁹³ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1118.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1176-1177.

little boat with white sails shining, the two of us together, laughing and talking and sailing east to the blue isles beyond in Alba.⁹⁵

Cooper calls this “a serious miscalculation on the part of Coulter and Willan, for dramatically and musically the solitary love duet of the opera – an integral element of the story – never really settles down into an acceptable expression of love expected between Deirdre and Naisi.”⁹⁶ Instead, Deirdre remains constantly on edge throughout the duet, giving the impression that the two “express their love for each other better when apart than when they are actually together [and] that their relationship is not wholly credible.”⁹⁷ Regardless, Deirdre’s decision in the final scene to kill herself and be with Naisi in death clearly shows her great love for him.

In the above excerpt, we also learn about Deirdre’s love of nature, which she refers to again in another cut passage: “I am a girl [who] has no mind to the easy settled life of noble women in Avan Macha. I would go wandering on a wild free life, hunting or fishing on the hills and streams with Naisi and his brothers.”⁹⁸

Cooper also points out how the original libretto “dwelt more adequately with Deirdre’s fear of displeasure with the old king, whose intentions to marry her were emphasized more clearly, thus strengthening her motivation for elopement.”⁹⁹ For her whole life, Deirdre has lived under Conochar’s strict control and Levercham, her caretaker, has had to report every account of Deirdre’s life to him. This is explained in a cut excerpt from Act 2, Scene 1 in which Levercham scolds Deirdre for wandering all day in the woods: “A fine reward you give me for letting you run free! But I must give a strict account of all

⁹⁵ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 26.

⁹⁶ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1117.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1118.

⁹⁸ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 33.

⁹⁹ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1117.

your doings to Conochar.”¹⁰⁰ In another cut excerpt from Act 2, Scene 1, Conochar announces his intention to make Deirdre his submissive wife: “From this night she will be dutiful and take my way and do my bidding, being my wife and queen.”¹⁰¹ Understanding how caged a life Deirdre has had to endure with Conochar, singers can better relate to her desperation to escape him – even if it means choosing death in the end.

Setting: (Act 1, Scene 2) In their “roughly built” timber house in the forest on Fuah Mountain, Levercham and the women apprehensively work on their spinning and sewing.¹⁰² Dusk sets in around them yet “[t]here is still light about the trees and leafy paths, and birds are still singing: blackbirds, thrushes, robins.”¹⁰³ The women worry because Deirdre has still not returned home and they fret that Conochar will find out about her mischievousness. One of Deirdre’s caretakers comments: “She has taken to gadding on the paths above the house watching the moon go up and dreaming.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 15.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹⁰² Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 16A (Act 1, Scene 2).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 (Act 2, Scene 1: mm. 270-273).

Aria 1: "Deirdre's Song"¹⁰⁵

Music: Healey Willan
Libretto: John Coulter

(A little off in the woods Deirdre is heard singing happily)

(♩ = c. 70-75)

Ah

Fls.

Ob. espr.

Strs. trem.

Detailed description: This system contains the first four measures of the score. The vocal line begins with a rest followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and continues with a melodic line. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a tremolo in the left hand. Instrumental parts for Flutes, Oboe (espresso), and Strings (tremolo) are also indicated.

5

By the whin-bush on the moun-tain where the

(Woman: I see her coming on the path beyond the well)

(poco agitato)

Strs.

Bsns.

Ob.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 through 8. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "By the whin-bush on the moun-tain where the". A parenthetical line indicates "(Woman: I see her coming on the path beyond the well)". The piano accompaniment is marked "(poco agitato)". Instrumental parts for Strings, Bassoons, and Oboe are shown.

9

yel-low yor-lin was sing-ing, And larks were ma-king mu-sic in the blue gap of the

Ob.

Hrn. II

Hrn. I

Hrn. III

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "yel-low yor-lin was sing-ing, And larks were ma-king mu-sic in the blue gap of the". Instrumental parts for Oboe and three Horns (II, I, III) are shown.

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¹⁰⁵ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the Canadian Music Centre from Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 20-25 (Act 1, Scene 2).

14

sky, I looked round, and oh, my heart was sud-den-ly faint_ in my

Fl.

mf *mp*

Hrns.

18

bo-som At sight of the young hun-ter who came gal-lo-ping by.

(Levercham: It is

Ob.

+ Fls.

Hrn. I

mf

22

Oh,

not for nothing she is singing like that, so blithe and above herself.)

Harp

p

25

black was his hair as the wing of the raven And proud as an

Ob.

Strs.

+ Hrns.

27

ea - gle was his head held so high, And his

29

limbs were as sup-ple as the hounds of Cu - chul - lain As he wheeled from his

Fls.

mf

pizz.

Vc.

Cls.

31

quar - ry and stood still at my cry.

(L: I'll have a word with herself alone.)

Vc.

33

He was quick when he saw me to come ra-cing be -

Fl.

f Harp
Vln. II trem.

35

fore me And he cal-ling out his name and ask-ing who was I; There was

38

fear on him when I told him, And I thought he would have

+ Fl.
p

40

left me, But we were together at the dusk of evening and till the

Ob. Fls.
mf *p*

43

moon was high. Oh, no young man so

+ Hrns.
mp

47

come - ly ev - er rode_ on our moun - tain And I know he is_ my

51

love by the ten - der light in his eye, And from

dim.

54

this day out it is my one wish_ to be near him,

Fls.
Cl.
p

57

Wa - king and sleep - ing, till the

Ob.
Vla. solo

3

60

day I die.

Vlns.
sord.

pp

pp Timp.

2.4.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

The aria is through-composed, however, for the sake of this discussion, it has been divided into four sections: A (mm. 1-22), B (mm. 22-32), C (mm. 33-44), and D (mm. 44-63). As previously mentioned, Willan places great importance on the natural inflection of the text so much of the aria is written in an arioso style. As Cooper describes: “The vocal lines are complex, blending Coulter’s poetic recitative and Willan’s songlike arioso, where melody and the spoken word intertwine.”¹⁰⁶ In addition, Coulter incorporates many eloquent literary techniques that singers should strive to highlight, such as “figures of speech, [...] repetition, old bardic techniques, internal rhymes, parallelism, [and] contrast.”¹⁰⁷ In “Deirdre’s Song,” singers should bring out Coulter’s use of color imagery: “yellow yorlin,” “blue gap,” and “black was his hair.”¹⁰⁸ (A “yellow yorlin,” more commonly known as a “yellowhammer,” refers to a small yellow bird and a “whinbush” refers to a yellow, thorny flowering plant.)¹⁰⁹

Willan gives very few tempi indications in the score. In this aria, he has written none and the last tempo marking (*lento*) occurs at the beginning of the scene.¹¹⁰ However, the two recordings of the opera available through the Canadian Music Centre’s Centrestreams – the CBC Opera Company’s broadcast of *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1951) and the Canadian Opera Company’s performance of *Deirdre* (1966) – demonstrate a fluidity in tempo.¹¹¹ In general, the earlier version uses much slower tempi and makes more abrupt, drastic

¹⁰⁶ Cooper, “Celtic Tragedy, Canadian Style.”

¹⁰⁷ Anthony, *John Coulter*, 119. Refer to Section 2.5.2 and 2.6.2 for further examples and discussion.

¹⁰⁸ Refer to the author’s “Deirdre’s Song” adaptation, mm. 9, 13, and 25.

¹⁰⁹ “Yellowhammer,” Wikipedia, accessed 22 December 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowhammer>; and “Ulex,” Wikipedia, accessed 22 December 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulex>.

¹¹⁰ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 17 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 225).

¹¹¹ Refer to: Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Wednesday Night” Broadcast, 1951, Tracks 1 and 2; and Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Tuesday Night” Broadcast, 1966, Tracks 1 and 2.

changes in tempo, while the Canadian Opera Company's performance flows easily with faster but more steady tempi. Mostly likely made in consultation with the composer and librettist, these alterations in tempo from the 1951 to the 1966 recordings give the piece greater forward momentum and help coordinate tempo changes between the singers on stage and the orchestra. Both recordings add a lot of *rubato* so singers should feel free to take tempo and rhythmic liberties for the purposes of dramatic expression. Since the latter recording represents Willan and Coulter's final, published version of the opera, the tempi used in this recording have been given preference in the following analysis. The overall tempo for "Deirdre's Song" should flow around ♩ = 70-75.

Throughout the aria, Willan "captures a sensuous quality evident in this scene of early twilight [...] done by means of a gentle interaction of chromatic and parallel harmonic movement, enhanced by delicate, shimmering instrumental effects."¹¹² He sets the dream-like landscape at the start of the aria through the use of parallel chromatic chords (Ex. 1). Some passages also feature a *tremolo* orchestral accompaniment that creates a "shimmering" effect and allows the voice above it to move with greater rhythmic freedom (Ex. 2).

As previously mentioned, Willan uses *leitmotifs* throughout the opera and associates them with certain characters and emotions. In this aria, Willan incorporates "Deirdre's Motive" (Ex. 3, mm. 40-41 and 59-60), which features two descending half steps in the solo flute or oboe.¹¹³ Descending semitones often carry a tragic association and here, they

¹¹² Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1129.

¹¹³ Clarke, *Healey Willan*, 127.

reference another motive heard later in “Deirdre’s Lament,” “The Death Motive” with its descending chromatic melody (refer to Ex. 7 in Section 2.5.2).¹¹⁴

In Section A (mm. 1-22), Deirdre depicts only a snippet of her first encounter with Naisi. After the aria, she describes the moment in greater detail:

A strange thing happened. I was sitting in a sunny gap sewing and singing, when my little dappled doe suddenly rose and ran off to the verge of the trees. And in a while I dreamed the doe came back, running before a hunter. [...] I spoke with him. [...] He took me in his arms, we were a long while in each other’s arms.¹¹⁵

To Deirdre, who has probably never seen another man other than old Conochar, the “comely” and “supple” young Naisi quickly sweeps her off her feet. The two immediately fall in love and get engaged. To Deirdre, Naisi represents hope for happiness and freedom in the nature that she loves.

Deirdre’s opening coloratura passage should be sung freely to portray an outpouring of joy and exhilaration. From mm. 6-22, Willan evokes a Celtic quality featuring an “ancient sounding folk song deployed on shifting modalities.”¹¹⁶ In mm. 15-22, the accompaniment again features the “shimmering” *tremolo* accompaniment over which singers may take more rhythmic freedom. Singers should highlight the commas in m. 15 and may take a breath after “bosom” at m. 18. They may also *crescendo* and push the tempo forward slightly in the following phrase (mm. 18-22) to portray Deirdre’s excitement when describing Naisi as the “young hunter.”

In the interlude leading into Section B (mm. 22-24), the accompaniment emulates a soft, dream-like quality as Deirdre becomes more reflective. When she describes Naisi’s

¹¹⁴ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1142 (Ex. 20, No. 17: “Death Motive”).

¹¹⁵ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 26-28 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 354-383).

¹¹⁶ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1110 and quoted on 1129.

likeness to Cuchullain – the most famed knight of Red Branch Knights of Ulster – the accompaniment again uses *tremolos*.¹¹⁷ Cuchullain is pronounced [kel 'ku læn].¹¹⁸ In mm. 25-28, singers may allow themselves greater rhythmic freedom and perhaps *accelerando* to m. 29 as Deirdre's enthusiasm grows. The last part of Section B should remain steadily in tempo (mm. 29-32) so that singers can emulate Naisi's strength with the fullness and colour of their voices.

In Section C (mm. 33-44), like the other recitative-arioso passages with *tremolo* accompaniment, singers may find it helpful to *accelerando* through. This forward momentum will help to portray Deirdre's eager anticipation and musically depict words such as "quick" and "racing." However in the Canadian Opera Company recording, Jeanette Zarou keeps Section C more steadily in tempo.¹¹⁹ She instead achieves the effect of acceleration and increased exhilaration through her use of diction and exaggerated [k] and [s] sounds, such as in the phrase: "He was quick when he saw me to come racing before me and he calling out his name and asking who was I."¹²⁰ Because much of this section lies within the *passaggio*, it may feel a bit arduous to sing. Therefore, singers with heavier voices may also find it easier to push the tempo forward. Regardless, keeping the soft palate high, relaxing the diction, and singing tall vowels will help singers keep a round tone and allow them to avoid accumulating excess tension.

In the latter part of Section C (mm. 37-45), singers should add *rubato* to express Deirdre's quick emotional shifts from excitement and apprehension to blissful dreaming. At

¹¹⁷ *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, s.v. "Ulster Cycle."

¹¹⁸ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio "Tuesday Night" Broadcast, 1966, Track 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Refer to the author's "Deirdre's Song" adaptation, mm. 33-37.

“there was fear on him” (m. 37-38), both recordings put in a slight lift, *ritardando*, and *decrescendo*. Singers should also portray a sudden change in affect from eagerness to trepidation as Naisi realizes who Deirdre is and her foretold doom with the Sons of Usnagh. The tempo should pick up again at, “and I thought he would have left me,” as if Deirdre sings the thought in a nervous flutter. Then in mm. 40-44, singers may expand, “but we were together,” and slow down the tempo (♩ = 60) to create a romantic, dream-like atmosphere.

In Section D, from mm. 44-51, the tempo should *accelerando* back to the original tempo (♩ = 70-75) or slightly faster and gradually *crescendo* to climax at “love” (m. 51). In the Canadian Opera Company recording, Zarou adds a slight lift after “love” then pulls back on the tempo to about ♩ = 60.¹²¹ She maintains this tempo until the end of the piece. In the CBC Opera Company recording, the tempo keeps moving until m. 55 and then relaxes on the triplet, “to be near him.”¹²² Both interpretations flow well and singers must determine the pacing of the aria based on their own dramatic interpretations. In the last four phrases of the aria (mm. 51-63), singers should form a gradual *diminuendo*.

¹²¹ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Tuesday Night” Broadcast, 1966, Track 1.

¹²² Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, sound recording, CBC Radio “Wednesday Night” Broadcast, 1951, Track 1.

Ex. 1 Chromatic, parallel harmonic movement, mm. 1-3.

Musical score for Flute (Fls.) in 3/4 time. The score shows three measures of chromatic, parallel harmonic movement. The melody in the treble clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment in the bass clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Ex. 2 “Shimmering” tremolo accompaniment, mm. 7-8.¹²³

Musical score for piano accompaniment in 3/4 time. The score shows two measures of a shimmering tremolo accompaniment. The melody in the treble clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment in the bass clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Ex. 3 “Deirdre’s Motive,” mm. 40-41.

Musical score for Oboe (Ob.) and piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The score shows two measures of Deirdre's Motive. The melody in the treble clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment in the bass clef consists of a series of eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The dynamics are marked *mf* and *p*.

¹²³ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “Deirdre’s Song” adaptation.

Ex. 4 Ancient, Celtic-sounding folk song, mm. 6-14.

The image displays a musical score for an ancient, Celtic-sounding folk song, measures 6-14. The score is presented in two systems. The first system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics: "By the whin-bush on the moun-tain where the yel-low yor-lin was sing-ing, And". The piano accompaniment features a string section (Strs.) and an oboe (Ob.). The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "larks were ma-king mu-sic in the blue gap of the sky,". The piano accompaniment includes horns (Hrn. I, Hrn. II, Hrn. III) and a flute (Fl.). The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The vocal line is in a soprano or alto range, and the piano accompaniment is in a lower register. The overall style is reminiscent of traditional Celtic folk music.

2.4.3 Adaptation Notes

For his operas, Willan always began his compositional process with the piano-vocal scores, from which he later constructed the orchestral scores.¹²⁴ Therefore, the aria adaptations in this anthology include the instrumental indications given in the Berandol vocal score. In some instances, a few parts simultaneously play the same pitch in different durations. This adaption mostly follows Willan's notation by aligning one of the voices slightly to the right. However, sometimes this gives the impression that there are too many beats in a bar. In these cases, preference has been given to the main melodic line (e.g. mm.

¹²⁴ Marwick, "The Sacred Choral Music of Healey Willan," 52-53.

19 and 34). Also, in m. 22 a C# has been added to the harp chords to match the C#'s written in the other voices.

Most of the Woman and Levercham's interjecting lines have been omitted from this adaptation since Deirdre does not hear them and because their "agitated" parts tend to disrupt the aria's dreamlike atmosphere. In addition, pianists would also not be able to play both the women's lines and the orchestral accompaniment. However, the women's texts have been included in parenthesis and the Woman's vocal line in mm. 5-6 has been incorporated into the accompaniment until the oboe part takes over the melodic line.

The lyrics in the Berandol score use only upper case letters and show very little punctuation. This adaptation mostly follows the punctuation given in Coulter's published libretto to help indicate to singers where phrases should begin and end.¹²⁵

2.5 "Deidre's Lament"

2.5.1 Aria description

Range: C#4-G5

Setting: (Act 3, Scene 2) Fergus has delivered Conochar's pledge of amnesty to the Usnagh brothers and they rejoice, eager to return to Ullah and their kinsmen. However, Deirdre does not trust Conochar and pleads with Naisi to stay. Naisi refuses to listen and calls her a nuisance, saying: "Your fear is childish and unworthy [...] Pay no heed to her talk, [...] that has no more sense then the screaming of seabirds here."¹²⁶ Shocked by his coldness, Deirdre asks him: "What has come on you that you will not listen to me? Why is it

¹²⁵ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 14.

¹²⁶ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 114 and 118 (Act 2, Scene 2: mm. 285-286 and mm. 323-325).

you will speak sharply to me, and will run blindly to the net Conochar has spread?"¹²⁷ Naisi brushes her aside and impatiently orders her to get ready to depart. In this lament, Deirdre reflects on her picturesque life with Naisi and resigns herself to the fate that in her heart she knows approaches: "Soon indeed [Naisi] will be at Peace with Conochar, and lying down beside myself, quiet forever in the woods."¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 115 (Act 2, Scene 2: mm. 293-297).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117-118 (Act 2, Scene 2: mm. 317-321).

Aria 2: "Deirdre's Lament"¹²⁹

Music: Healey Willan
Libretto: John Coulter

*(Naisi, with a gesture of impatience goes on, leaving Deirdre alone.
Desolate, she sings her lament.)*

Andante (♩ = c. 65)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of Andante (♩ = c. 65). It consists of three systems of vocal and piano accompaniment.

System 1: The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Oh, Nai-si, it is heart-grief to". The piano accompaniment includes parts for Clarinet (Cls.), Bassoon (Bsns.), Horn (Hrn.), Strings (Strs.), Flute (Fls.), and Harp. The piano part features a prominent triplet in the right hand.

System 2: The vocal line continues with "me to be go-ing from our safe-ty on the love-ly shore of Kil-". The piano accompaniment includes parts for Violins (Vlns.), Flute (Fl.), and Viola (Vla.).

System 3: The vocal line concludes with "cu-an, From the lit-tle ro-wan tree, our tree;". The piano accompaniment includes parts for Harp, Clarinet I (Cl. I), Violin (Vc.), and Bassoon II (Bsn. II).

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¹²⁹ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the Canadian Music Centre from Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 120-122 (Act 3, Scene 2).

8

from our quiet glen and the

(Hrn. I) Harp

10

hill of the hare, To be go-ing where it is on-ly a

Harp Vln. I Vln. II + Hrn. II (stpd.) Vla.

12

bit-ter taste of trea-che-ry and ru-in And the si-lence of a

Hrns.

14

lone-ly grave closed in for ev-er be-tween my

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16

love_ and me. Oh, Nai - si,

+ Fl. *mf* Ob. *p*

19

Nai - si! My pride, my je - wel,

Harp Ob. *mf*

23

my on - ly dar - ling a - mong the sup - ple young men,

Cls. Bsn. Vln. II Vla. Ob. Sim. Timp. *pp*

27

Why will you turn a - way, a - way; why

Vlns. (Sord.) + Fl.

Hrn. *p*

32

will you run past me when I am stand - ing be - tween you and death?

Cl. # *pp* + Hrns.

+ Bsns.

36

Yet while there is breath _____ in my

p Ob.

Harp

II Trb.

III Trb.

40

bo - dy I will say on - ly that I love you, I

Trb. I

Vln. I

Strs.

43

love you; and then, then

Fls.

Vln. II

mp

Cb.

46

I will turn quiet - ly to the end as a tir - ed child

Vla.

+ Hrns.

Vc. Soli

49

turns to sleep at the

V. II 3 3 3 V. I

pp
Trbs.

51

close of the long day.

Hrn. V. I. Cls.

Harp

Timp.

53

Ob. Cl. Vla. Solo

rit.

5

2.5.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

Like the previous aria, Willan has written “Deirdre’s Lament” as a through-composed arioso. For the purposes of this discussion, the aria has been divided into five sections: A (mm. 1-18), B (mm. 18-26), C (mm. 27-35), D (mm. 36-46), and E (mm. 46-56). Again, Willan gives no tempo indications so singers must determine how they want to pace the aria in order to keep it from feeling overly static. The following discussion suggests tempi markings and places in which singers may add *rubato*.

In Section A (mm. 1-18), Deirdre reflects on her life with Naisi. The stage directions included in the published libretto give a more detailed description of how Coulter imagined the dramatic action and Deirdre’s emotions at the top of the aria:

With a gesture of impatience Naisi goes on, leaving [Deirdre] alone there. She stands a moment, desolated. Buries her face in her hands. Crosses the scene. Gazes a moment after them. Then sings her lament.¹³⁰

Marked *andante* at the beginning of the scene (Act 2, Scene 2), Section A flows well around ♩ = 65.¹³¹ Throughout the aria and particularly within this section, Coulter uses “old bardic techniques of prosody” with literary devices such as internal rhymes (“Kilcuan,” “rowan,” and “ruin”), internal repetitions (“tree, our tree”), and alliterations (“hill of the hare”).¹³² Singers should utilize this textual lyricism to further accentuate and colour the meaning of the words.

From mm. 8-16, singers may freely add *rubato* to portray Deirdre’s turbulent emotions (Ex. 5). When her thoughts turn to Conochar’s “bitter taste of treachery” (mm. 11-

¹³⁰ Coulter, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 57.

¹³¹ Willan and Coulter, *Deirdre*, vocal score, 104 (Act 2, Scene 2: m. 172).

¹³² Anthony, *John Coulter*, 119.

12), she breaks the pastoral and tranquil atmosphere with a quickly ascending phrase.¹³³ In m. 12, singers may push the tempo forward to emphasize Deirdre's outburst of anger then add a slight *allargando* in mm. 13-14 when she references death. Also, singers may find it useful to breathe before "and the silence" (m. 13) to quickly change the affect from anger to sadness. Singers should avoid taking a breath after "grave" and instead *crescendo* and *accelerando* the rest of the phrase without a breath until after "closed in forever." This gives the phrase a greater sense of direction and increases its dramatic intention. At "between my love and me" (mm. 15-16), singers may ease the tempo back again and emphasize the triplet on "love and me" (m. 16) to depict Deirdre's more reflective emotions. In the short interlude (mm. 16-17) that echoes the vocal line of m. 16, pianists may also add *rubato* by pushing forward the first half of the phrase and pulling back on the second half to give the music a sense of ebb and flow (Ex 6).

When Deirdre's thoughts turn back to Naisi in Section B (mm. 18-26), she becomes more passionate and the tempo should reflect this by moving slightly faster at about $\text{♩} = 70\text{-}75$. Singers may add a slight *allargando* at "My only darling among the supple young men" (mm. 23-25) to portray Deirdre's more tender and reflective thoughts.

In Section C (mm. 27-35), Deirdre despairs because she cannot understand why Naisi refuses to listen to her. Although it is a large change in tempo, this section moves well at about $\text{♩} = 90$ where singers can achieve a more lyrical line and avoid a sense of singing from beat-to-beat. Under Deirdre's gradually descending vocal line, Willan has placed "The Death Motive" (Ex. 7) with its chromatically descending melody to foreshadow her doomed

¹³³ Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1165.

fate.¹³⁴ He also “heightens the pathos by setting the pattern of descending thirds in contrary motion chordal progressions [to] yield[...] increasingly dissonant harmonies.”¹³⁵ In m. 34, singers may add a lift before, “and death,” and a *ritardando* afterwards to emphasize the finality of the word “death” (Ex. 8).

Leading into Section D (mm. 36-46), Willan features “Deirdre’s Motive” in the orchestra (Ex. 9).¹³⁶ The tempo for this section should begin around ♩ = 80-85 and significantly *accelerando* so that by m. 42, the tempo moves around ♩ = 60 (or ♩ = 120). This increase in momentum helps portray Deirdre’s outpouring of emotion and her passionate declaration of love for Naisi. In mm. 43-46, Willan writes a “cadential-like fauxbourdon chain of intermingled duplets and triplets” reminiscent of his English sacred style writing (Ex. 10).¹³⁷ This passage symbolically leads to a cadence of Deirdre’s love for Naisi in A minor (m. 51). As Cooper points out: “It is thus that Deirdre’s final bittersweet expression of love is made.”¹³⁸

In Section E (mm. 46-56), the tempo should gradually slow down to ♩ = 100 at “tired child” in m. 48. The entire section should also gradually *diminuendo* to portray Deirdre’s acceptance of her fate “as a tired child turns to sleep at the close of a long day” (mm. 48-53). Cooper points out how the “gradual slowing down of melodic tension and harmonic rhythm hints at her quiet resignation and noble resolution to withdraw from life.”¹³⁹ Singers may freely add *rubato* within this section to maintain a sense of forward momentum.

¹³⁴ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1165 and 1142 (“The Death Motive”: Ex. 20, No. 17).

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1165.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 1165 and 1168.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 1168.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Throughout the aria and especially in mm. 4-9 and 48-49, the vocal part and accompaniment often do not align, creating a slightly unsettling effect and an increase in tension (Ex. 11).¹⁴⁰ In instances such as these where performers may wish to add *rubato*, singers should clearly delineate the beat so that pianists can easily fit their part in with the vocal line. In mm. 48-53, singers may find it challenging to keep their voices spinning evenly on the long held, soft notes. They may find it helpful to use vowel modifications and to add a bit of [u] to the vowel to help focus the tone. In general, the diction in *Deirdre* should follow a more “British” rather than “North American” pronunciation.

Ex. 5 Suggestions for *rubato*, mm. 9-16.¹⁴¹

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features a vocal line with lyrics: "quiet glen and the hill of the hare, To be go-ing where it is on-ly a bit-ter taste of trea-che-ry and". Above the vocal line, performance instructions include "Slight rit." and "crescendo & accelerando" with a right-pointing arrow. The piano accompaniment includes parts for Harp, Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., + Hrn. II (stpd.), and Hrns. The second system features a vocal line with lyrics: "ru - in And the si - lence of a lone-ly grave closed in for ev - er be - tween my love... and me." Above the vocal line, performance instructions include "rit.", "Slight allargando", "(No breath)", "crescendo & accelerando" with a right-pointing arrow, and "Slight rit.". The piano accompaniment includes parts for + Fl. and Hrns.

¹⁴⁰ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1167.

¹⁴¹ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “Deirdre’s Lament” adaptation.

Ex. 6 Vocal line echoed in the accompaniment and suggestions for *rubato*, mm. 16-18.

Musical score for Ex. 6, measures 16-18. The vocal line (top staff) features a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) followed by a quarter note (B4), with the lyrics "love... and me." underneath. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand (F#4, G4, A4) and a quarter note (B4) in the left hand. Performance markings include "Slight accel." and "Slight rit." above the piano part, and dynamic markings *mf* and *p*. Instrumentation includes Flute (+ Fl.) and Oboe (Ob.).

Ex. 7 "The Death Motive," mm. 29-33.

Musical score for Ex. 7, measures 29-33. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass staves) features a "Death Motive" consisting of a sequence of chords: F#4-A4-C#5, G4-B4-D#5, and A4-C#5-E5. The melody is primarily in the right hand, with some bass line activity in the left hand.

Ex. 8 Suggested breath, mm. 33-35.

Musical score for Ex. 8, measures 33-35. The vocal line (top staff) features a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) followed by a quarter note (B4), with the lyrics "when I am stand-ing be - tween you and death?" underneath. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand (F#4, G4, A4) and a quarter note (B4) in the left hand. Performance markings include "ritardando" above the vocal line, and dynamic marking *pp* in the piano part. Instrumentation includes Clarinet (Cl.), Horns (+ Hrns.), and Bassoons (+ Bsns.).

Ex. 9 "Deirdre's Motive," mm. 36-37.

Ob. *p*

II Trb.

III Trb.

Ex. 10 "Cadential-like fauxbourdon chain," mm. 44-46.

Ex. 11 Hemiola between vocal part and accompaniment, mm. 48-49.

as a tir - ed child turns to

Vla.

V. II

2.5.3 Adaptation Notes

As in the previous aria, on some occasions several parts simultaneously play the same pitch with different durations. These have been combined or notated in a way to facilitate legibility in mm. 5, 21, and 52-53. Also, since the aria segues into the following scene (Act 2, Scene 3), mm. 395-401 of the vocal score have been cut and slightly altered to make a more final sounding postlude.

3. *LOUIS RIEL*

3.1 Background

The Canadian Opera Company's production of *Louis Riel* premiered to near-capacity audiences at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre on 23 September 1967.¹⁴² It received rave reviews and, as *The Toronto Star* describes, the audience "erupted into an uproar. Finally everyone was standing, clapping, shouting, [and] cheering."¹⁴³ *The Toronto Telegram* also proclaimed that "*Louis Riel* rolled into public view like a mighty cannon dead on target"¹⁴⁴ and *Time* magazine described the work as having an "undeniably masterful score" and a "compelling libretto."¹⁴⁵

The Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation commissioned *Louis Riel* to premiere during Canada's centennial year celebrations.¹⁴⁶ Four other operas also premiered at this event including the Canadian Opera Company's production of Raymond Pannell's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, and CBC Radio's productions of Murray Adaskin's *Grant, Warden of the Plains*, Kelsey Jone's *Sam Slick*, and Robert Turner's *The Brideship*.¹⁴⁷ When publisher and philanthropist, Floyd Chalmers approached librettist Mavor Moore about creating "a Canadian opera," Moore immediately took inspiration from his experience playing the lead

¹⁴² For its three premiere performances, the audience in the O'Keefe Centre was at about 90% capacity for a 3,155 seat theatre, see: R. Murray Schafer, *Louis Riel: A Case Study* (Toronto: Institute for Music, Dance and Theatre, 1971), 25.

¹⁴³ *The Toronto Star*, n.d., n.p., quoted in Schafer, *Louis Riel: A Case Study*, 24.

¹⁴⁴ *The Toronto Telegram* (25 September, 1967), n.p., quoted in Schafer, *Louis Riel: A Case Study*, 24.

¹⁴⁵ *Time* magazine quoted in William Littler, "A Centennial Opera," in liner notes for Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, Canadian Opera Company and National Arts Centre Orchestra, producer Digby Peets, Canadian Music Centre Centrediscs CMC 2485, 1985, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Louis Riel* also received additional funding from The Canadian Centennial Commission, The Canada Council, and The Province of Ontario Council for the Arts. Lillian Buckler, "The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1984), 14, accessed 28 June 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/303346995?accountid=1465>.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

in John Coulter's play, *Riel* (1950).¹⁴⁸ He then got in touch with composer Harry Somers and together, they created an opera that, as Moore says, uses "the conventions and traditions of Grand Opera as a form of nation-building, a platform for discovering who we are," and which, through the musical telling of Riel's life, touches upon the "universal themes that make his story at one and the same time both ours and humanity's."¹⁴⁹ Moore and his collaborator, Jacques Languirand, also created a multi-lingual libretto that blends together four different languages to reflect Canada's diverse and multi-cultural heritage.¹⁵⁰

For the centennial, Somers and Moore created a lavish, grand-scale production with expenses totalling \$186,314 – nearly triple the cost of a typical Canadian Opera Company production at that time.¹⁵¹ The opera calls for thirty-five named soloists, a large chorus, seventeen scene changes, prepared tape, and an orchestra including harp, piano, celeste, and a six-person percussion ensemble. Following its premiere, *Louis Riel* performed at the World Expo '67 in Montreal and again in Toronto with the Canadian Opera Company in 1968. In addition, the opera received national radio and television broadcasts through CBC Radio on 15 and 19 October 1967 and CBC-TV on 29 October 1969.¹⁵² In 1975, the Canadian Opera Company revived the opera for performances in Toronto, as well as at the Kennedy Centre in Washington, D.C. for the American Bicentennial celebrations. The opera has also received productions by educational institutions such as McGill University (2005)

¹⁴⁸ Richard Turp, "Louis Riel: Harry Somers' Grand Opera Revived at McGill University," *Opera Canada* 46, no. 1 (Spring, 2005): 26, accessed 27 February 2017, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1158722?accountid=14656>. Refer to Section 2.1.1.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Mavor Moore, "The Theme is Timeless," originally published in the Canadian Opera Company's souvenir program for *Louis Riel* (1967), reprinted in the liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 7.

¹⁵¹ As Schafer points out, *Louis Riel* cost about \$62, 000 per show, whereas, a typical performance at the Canadian Opera Company normally cost around \$18, 000. Even a large-scale production such as *Aida*, only averaged around \$30, 000 per show. See Schafer, *Louis Riel: A Case Study*, 26.

¹⁵² The following performance history has been gathered from Betty Nygaard King and Kenneth Winters, "Louis Riel (opera)," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, published 7 February 2006, last modified 4 July 2015, accessed 17 August 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/louis-riel-emc>.

and the University of British Columbia (2010). For Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017, *Louis Riel* returned to the Canadian Opera Company stage and received performances at both the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.¹⁵³

From its many prolific performances and widespread exposure, *Louis Riel* has become one of the most important works in the Canadian operatic repertoire. At its opening night, critics already sensed the great impact it would have as John Kraglund of *The Globe and Mail* proclaimed, "Canadian opera took its first gigantic leap forward,"¹⁵⁴ and Harold Rosenthal in the British publication, *Opera*, predicted: "*Louis Riel* may do for Canadian opera what *Peter Grimes* did for English opera. It is a massive, moving and probably exportable historical opera."¹⁵⁵ Although *Louis Riel* portrays the life of an important figure in Canadian history, it also tells a story to which other nations can relate. As conductor, Victor Feldbrill states, its "theme is universal and practically every country has in its history, somewhere, the story of the struggle of a hero fighting for the rights of his people."¹⁵⁶

3.1.1 Librettists: Mavor Moore & Jacques Languirand

3.1.1.1 Mavor Moore

James Mavor Moore (1919-2006), prolific writer, producer, director, actor, composer, educator, critic, and arts advocate, "was not only a pioneer in the development

¹⁵³ Jennifer Pugsley and Kristin McKinnon, "Media Release: Canadian Opera Company Assembles All-Canadian Cast for *Louis Riel*," Canadian Opera Company, 20 March 2017, accessed 21 May 2017, <http://files.coc.ca/pdfs/PressRelease/1617pressreleases/COC%20Release%20-%20Louis%20Riel%20-%20Casting%20-%20FINAL1.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ John Kraglund, "*Louis Riel's* First Audience Gives a Standing Ovation," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 September 1967, 16, accessed 3 August 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1270331179?accountid=14656>.

¹⁵⁵ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera*, November 1967, quoted in Littler, "A Centennial Opera," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 3.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

of a truly Canadian theatre scene, he also devoted his time and energy to serving all Canadian artists.”¹⁵⁷ In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the arts, Moore was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1973 and a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1988.¹⁵⁸ He also received numerous awards including The Centennial Medal (1967), Queen’s Medal (1977), John Drainie ACTRA Award (1982), Canadian Conference of the Arts’ Diplôme d’honneur (1985), Canada Council Molson Prize for the Humanities (1986), The Governor General’s Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts (1999), The Order of British Columbia (1999), as well as seven honorary doctorates.¹⁵⁹ Throughout his career, Moore continually advocated for the arts leaving behind a great legacy. He served as either the founding head or first chair of numerous artistic institutions, such as The National Theatre School, Charlottetown’s Confederation Centre (1964–1968), St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Toronto (1965–1970), Canadian Music Council (1985-1987), Jeunesses musicales du Canada (1985-1987), British Columbia Arts Council (1996-1998), Canadian Theatre Centre (1957-1963), Guild of Canadian Playwrights (1975), and the Canada Council for the Arts (1979-1983).

¹⁵⁷ Spoken by Karen Kain, Chair of the Canada Council, in a press statement following Moore’s passing in 2006, quoted in Jennifer Wise, Peter Perrin, and Betty Nygaard King, “Mavor Moore,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 8 September 2008, accessed 1 August 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/james-mavor-moore>.

¹⁵⁸ The following biographical material has been gathered from: Jerry Fairbridge, “Moore, James Mavor (1919-2006),” *Canadian Communications Foundation*, February 2003, accessed 1 August 2016, <http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/personalities/personalities.php%3Fid%3D123>; Mavor Moore, *Reinventing Myself: Memoirs* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1994); and “Mavor Moore,” in liner notes for Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, directors Barbara Chilcott and Robert Cram, recorded in Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969, Centrediscs CMC DVD 16711, 2011; and Wise, Perrin, and Nygaard King, “Mavor Moore.”

¹⁵⁹ Moore received the Honorary Doctor of Letters from York University (1969), University of Guelph (1985), University of Windsor (1986) University of Victoria (1999), and Honorary Doctor of Laws from Mount Allison University (1982), Memorial University (1984), and University of Toronto (2004).

Moore's mother, Dora Mavor Moore was an actress, teacher, and arts advocate. She set him on his theatrical career path by staging his first play, which he wrote at the age of twelve, at the Eaton Girls Dramatic Club in Toronto. By fourteen, Moore had already found work as a radio actor and after graduating from the University of Toronto (1941), he became a feature producer for CBC Radio. After serving in WWII as a recruitment and intelligence officer, Moore produced, directed, and acted for radio, television, and theatre across Canada and the United States, appearing in about sixty films. He held positions as producer for CBC International Services (c.1945-1950), first chief producer for CBC TV (1952-1954), and executive television producer for the United Nations (1955-1960). Later in his career, Moore turned towards teaching and served on faculty at York University (1970-1984), University of Victoria (1984) and University of Lethbridge (1986). In 1990, he settled in Victoria, British Columbia with his third wife, opera singer, Alexandra Browning and their daughter.

Moore's output as a writer and composer spans over a hundred works for stage, radio, and television. He has written the music and/or lyrics for six musicals, including *Anne of Green Gables: The Musical* (1965) – which became Canada's longest-running stage show – and the popular, *A Christmas Carol* (1988). Moore has also written several opera libretti including, Harry Freedman's *Abracadabra* (1979), Gregory Levin's *Ghost Dance* (1985), Louis Applebaum's *Erewhon* (2000), and of course, Harry Somers' *Louis Riel*. In addition, Moore directed the Canadian Opera Company's productions of *The Love of Three Oranges* (1959), *A Night in Venice* (1960), *The Bartered Bride* (1961), and *Don Giovanni* (1963).

When writing the libretto for *Louis Riel*, Moore elaborated on Coulter's play by emphasizing "the irony which makes Louis Riel's life into superb drama."¹⁶⁰ This being Riel's justification for Thomas Scott's execution and Sir John A. Macdonald's same reasoning for Riel's execution: to "not permit one man to stand in the way of a whole nation."¹⁶¹ With a "Canadian character in the face of the lack of a Canadian operatic tradition," Moore and Somers chose to set *Louis Riel* in "a new fashion," with an "indelibly bilingual" libretto.¹⁶² The characters in the opera speak in the language they would naturally speak in any scene, using French, English, Cree (Marguerite Riel's first-language), and Latin (for liturgical references). For the French portions of the libretto, Moore collaborated with Montreal playwright, Jacques Languirand.¹⁶³

Staying as true to history as possible, Moore included many historical characters and even incorporated Riel's own words into the libretto.¹⁶⁴ For example, many of the poignant phrases in Act 3, Scene 6 (Trial Scene), such as, "I say humbly, through God's grace I am the prophet of this New World," came from the speech Louis Riel gave at his trial in 1885.¹⁶⁵ However for dramatic reasons, Moore did simplify some historical aspects, such as combining the roles of Father Joseph-Noël Ritchot from the first rebellion into the single character of Bishop Taché from the second rebellion.¹⁶⁶ Also, in order to present Riel as

¹⁶⁰ Moore, "The Theme is Timeless," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 7.

¹⁶¹ Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, *Louis Riel*, French text by Jacques Languirand, photocopy of manuscript, vocal score, in the possession of the Canadian Music Centre, 1967, 101 (Act 2, Scene 2) and 271 (Act 3, Scene 7).

¹⁶² Moore, "The Theme is Timeless," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 7.

¹⁶³ Refer to Section 3.1.1.2.

¹⁶⁴ Patricia Martin Shand, *Teachers' Guide to "Louis Riel"* (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 1985), 2.

¹⁶⁵ Louis Riel, *The Queen v. Louis Riel* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1886), 152, Early Canadiana Online: Early Official Publications 30472, accessed 27 September 2016, 152, <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.30472>; and Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, *Louis Riel*, French text by Jacques Languirand, photocopy of manuscript, full score, PDF, in the possession of the Canadian Music Centre, 1967, 576 (Act 3, Scene 6).

¹⁶⁶ Ritchot's character, however, does appear in the opera as one of Riel's supporters. Warren Davies, "Interview with Harry Somers and Mavor Moore," in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, extra features.

“the romantic visionary,” Moore and Somers allowed the “presentation of the character and the type [to] take precedence over the specific historical detail[s].”¹⁶⁷ Some have criticized that Macdonald’s characterization in the original production may seem a bit farcical.¹⁶⁸ However, Somers points out that this contrast in character archetype between Macdonald and Riel heightens the drama by allowing “a real contention between the two.”¹⁶⁹

3.1.1.2 Jacques Languirand

Montreal playwright, Jacques Languirand (b. 1931) is an important figure in French-Canadian broadcasting and television.¹⁷⁰ He has received numerous honours including Officer of the Order of Canada (2003), Prix Georges-Émile-Lapalme (2004), Radio-Canada’s Prix du vice-président (2003-04), Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Québec (2004), Cercle des Phénix (2006), Governor General’s Performing Arts Award, and an honorary doctorate from McGill University (2002).

3.1.2 Composer: Harry Somers

Harry Stewart Somers (1925-1999) began intensive piano studies at the age of thirteen and later studied composition with John Weinzweig at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto (1942-1943).¹⁷¹ Throughout his career, Somers received numerous

¹⁶⁷ Somers quoted in Davies, “Interview with Harry Somers and Mavor Moore,” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, extra features.

¹⁶⁸ Schafer, *Louis Riel: A Case Study*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Somers quoted from Davies, “Interview with Harry Somers and Mavor Moore,” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, extra features.

¹⁷⁰ The following biographical material is gathered from “Jacques Languirand,” in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD.

¹⁷¹ The following biographical material is taken from: “Harry Somers,” liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD; Buckler, “The Use of Folk Music In Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 8-11; Diana Houghton, “The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers” (DMA diss. University of Missouri, 1980), 5-13; and Andrew Michael Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” (PhD diss. University of Toronto, 1996), ProQuest (NN18875), accessed 5 August 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304297689?accountid=1465>.

grants to study abroad which greatly impacted his compositional style; he studied composition in Paris with Darius Milhaud (1949-1950), Gregorian chant at the Benedictine monastery in Solesmes, France (1961), Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* in Rome (1969-71), and Asian music in Japan, India, Nepal, Thailand, and Bali.¹⁷²

A strong advocate of music education, Somers became a consultant with The John Adaskin Project to aid in the teaching and performance of Canadian music in Toronto schools (1968 and 1969). To educate audiences of Canadian and contemporary music, he hosted a youth concert series on CBC TV (1963) and the "Music of Today" series on CBC-FM (1965-1969). Somers was also a founding member of the Canadian League of Composers, and in 1972, he was appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada. He has also received honorary doctorates from the University of Ottawa (1975), University of Toronto (1976), and York University (1977).

At the beginning of his career in the early 1950's, Somers worked as a music copyist to earn extra income and to allow himself more time to compose. He quickly established himself as a prominent composer, and by the late 1950's, he made his livelihood solely based on the commissions that he received from across North America.¹⁷³ As one of Canada's most prolific composers, Somers earned himself an "international reputation" writing for stage, recital, film, radio, and television. His output includes operas, ballets, solo vocal and piano works as well as orchestral, chamber, electronic, and choral music. He has written six operas: *The Fool* (1953), *Louis Riel* (1967), *The Death of Enkidu* (1977), *A Midwinter Night's Dream* (1988), *Serinette* (1990), and *Mario and the Magician* (1992).

¹⁷² Houghton, "The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers," 23.

¹⁷³ Buckler, "The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," 8.

With *Louis Riel*, Somers created a multi-level composition in which he uses five different compositional styles: 1) the development of folk song material, 2) abstract, atonal orchestral writing, 3) straight-forward diatonic writing, 4) electronic sounds and taped voices, and 5) a constant juxtaposition of all of these styles.¹⁷⁴ Throughout the opera, he draws upon Canada's musical heritage with the integration of "original folk material." As Somers said, he makes the folk songs "indigenous to the whole work so that certain themes and tunes keep recurring, taking on different shapes according to the way events progress. A simple tune at the outset, for example, has another color and kind of significance later."¹⁷⁵

Somers derives most of this folk material from historian, Margaret Arnett MacLeod's *Songs of Old Manitoba* (1959) that features songs local to the Red River – although many of the melodies actually originated elsewhere.¹⁷⁶ From MacLeod's work, Somers includes: "Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux," a song with text by Pierre Falcon, "the Bard of the Prairie Métis," which plays upon William McDougall's callous remark referring to himself as "King of the country"; "The Marching Song," with text composed by the Hudson's Bay Company officer, A. H. Murray, for his troop's march to free Riel's prisoners from Fort Garry on 15 February 1870; and "The Buffalo Hunt," a song originally composed by Falcon and inspired by his life in Red River.¹⁷⁷ Somers also borrows the song, "We'll Hang Him up the River," from Coulter's *Riel*, which he uses to depict the outraged Orangeman crowds after

¹⁷⁴ Harry Somers, "Discussing the Score," originally published in the Canadian Opera Company's souvenir program for *Louis Riel* (1967), reprinted in the liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ W. L. Morton, "Introduction," in *Songs of Old Manitoba*, collected and edited by Margaret Arnett MacLeod, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1960), ix-x.

¹⁷⁷ Buckler, "The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," 19-21. For the original folk melody transcriptions, refer to: MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, 36-38 ("Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux"), 50 ("The Marching Song"), and 20-22 ("Buffalo Hunt"). For examples of Somers use of these folk songs, refer to Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, Insert #3 and 44-46 (Act 1, Scene 2: "Les Tribulations d'un Roi"), 1 (Introduction: "The Marching Song"), and 149A-156A (Dance No. 2 in the introduction to Act 2, Scene 6: "Buffalo Hunt").

hearing Coulter describe it as a “fearsome thing” that the rioting mobs in Ireland would sing.¹⁷⁸ For Marguerite’s aria, “Kuyas,” Somers uses a compilation of Cree texts as well as motivic material from the song, “Hano,” collected by Dr. Marius Barbeau and Sir Ernest MacMillan in 1927, and later published in *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music* by ethnomusicologist, Viola Edmundson Garfield.¹⁷⁹ Until recently, the song was thought to be of Tsimshian origin but in 2017, the Canadian Opera Company learned that it is actually the “Song of Skateen,” a Nisga’a mourning song from Northern British Columbia.¹⁸⁰ (For more information on the “Song of Skateen,” refer to Section 3.5.3)

To increase the dramatic tension and contrast in *Louis Riel*, Somers juxtaposes his use of folk songs, atonal orchestral music, diatonic music, and electronic sounds. Andrew Michael Zinck, suggests that Somers often uses stylistic juxtaposition to “define various characters, heighten the dramatic intensity of events, and highlight dramatic oppositions in the opera.”¹⁸¹ To achieve “maximum tension,” he often superimposes tonal and atonal music.¹⁸² As Somers explains, “Tonal and tonal-centre organizations create their ‘solar

¹⁷⁸ Somers quoted from Davies, “Interview with Harry Somers and Mavor Moore,” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, extra features. For examples of “We’ll Hang Him up the River,” refer to John Coulter, *Riel: A Play in Two Parts*, musical transcriptions by Healey Willan (Hamilton, Ont.: Cromlech Press, 1962), 39; and Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 124-126 (Act 2, Scene 4) and 162 (Act 2, Scene 6), and 263 (Act 3, Scene 6).

¹⁷⁹ Refer to Viola Edmundson Garfield, *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music*, (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1951), Chapter 10: “Transcription of the Songs,” Song No. 69 “Hano,” accessed 24 July 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/miun.acr7574.0018.001>; Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 171-176 (Act 3, Scene 1); and Jennifer Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions Hosted by COC,” Canadian Opera Company, 12 April 2017, accessed 21 May 2017, <http://www.coc.ca/AboutTheCOC/MediaRoom/MediaReleases.aspx?EntryID=24461>.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Cooper, “Canada Turns 150, But a Silent Chorus Isn’t Celebrating,” *The New York Times*, 19 April 2017, accessed 21 May 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/19/arts/music/canada-turns-150-but-a-silent-chorus-isnt-celebrating.html?_r=0; and Colleen Renihan, “The Politics of Genre: Exposing Historical Tensions in Harry Somers’ *Louis Riel*,” in *Opera Indigene: Re/presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures*, ed. Pamela Karatonis and Dylan Robinson (New York: Routledge, 2016), 267, accessed 21 May 2017, <http://uoftmusicicm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Renihan-Opera-Indigene-Ch14.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ Andrew Michael Zinck, “An Enduring Canadian Opera,” liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, 4.

¹⁸² Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” 8.

systems' so strongly that, for me, maximum tension is achieved only by fracturing them and jarring them with non-tonal material."¹⁸³ In addition, Somers also uses electronic sounds and taped voices heard from speakers placed throughout the theatre to "achieve a sound totally unfamiliar to the audience."¹⁸⁴

Somers also juxtaposes various styles of orchestral writing, instrumentation, and vocal line to further define and enhance the contrast between the Métis of the West and the Orangemen of the East. To depict the West, Somers features a more abstract, atonal orchestral style that acts independently of the vocal line. Zinck describes the Westerner's music as having "a strongly dissonant background [that] supports sustained single pitches or chords with sharply defined dynamic envelopes, punctuated by nervous rhythmic outbursts."¹⁸⁵ In addition, Somers also associates the unique instrumental timbres of the flute, sleigh-bells, and drums – especially the tom-toms – with the First Nations' music as can be heard in Marguerite's aria, "Kuyas."¹⁸⁶ For the East, Somers typically uses more of what he refers to as "straight diatonic writing" with its lighter mood and orchestration. He also uses a "mix of timbres [...] playful woodwind banter and prominent brass," which emphasize Ontario's more "urban musical culture."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Harry Somers, "Harry Somers' Letter to Lee Hepner," *The Canada Music Book 3* (Autumn-Winter): 87-87, quoted in Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 8. For an example of Somers' superimposition of tonal and atonal music to increase dramatic tension, refer to Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 162-167 (Act 2, Scene 6). Here Riel accuses Taché of betraying him as the angry troop of Orangemen march towards them and Somers increases the dramatic tension by superimposing the tonal melody of the offstage chorus' "We'll Hang Him Up The River" with the atonal orchestration and vocal lines of the onstage characters.

¹⁸⁴ Somers, "Discussing the Score," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 9. For musical examples, refer to Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, full score, 1-5 (Introduction) and 509-516 (Battle Scene Interlude).

¹⁸⁵ Zinck, "An Enduring Canadian Opera," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Buckler, "The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," 70-71. Refer to Section 3.5.

¹⁸⁷ Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 138. For an example of the musical characteristics that Somers often associates with the East, refer to Macdonald's "Sugar" aria in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 62-65 and 65A (Act 1, Scene 2).

In *Louis Riel*, a character's mode of vocal declamation expresses a lot about the individual. Somers uses an array of vocal writing spanning from regular speech, to a quasi-sung speech akin to *Sprechstimme*, to full lyrical singing. Characters associated with the West typically communicate in fully sung lines with added melismatic, ornamental patterns.¹⁸⁸ As Zinck points out, "the vocal lines of many Westerners are at times freely decorated by strongly-accented grace notes and two-to-three-note ornamental figures."¹⁸⁹ (Somers often uses these ornamental embellishments in his adaptation of folk song material, discussed in further detail in Section 3.5.) For example, Riel always sings lyrically, often with added ornaments serving as "emotionally-charged virtuosic musical expression."¹⁹⁰ In contrast, characters associated with the East communicate in a regular to sung speech style of delivery. For example, Macdonald rarely sings any lyrical lines and instead uses a "rather satirical form of heightened speech – a parlando kind of presentation."¹⁹¹ Zinck suggests that for the Easterners, Somers reserves their use of lyricism to indicate "rare moments of heightened emotion, for persuasive force, or for deception."¹⁹² For example in Act 2, Scene 5, Macdonald uses sung line to persuade Bishop Taché to assist him and once he has done so, he quickly switches back to rhythmic speech.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 132.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* For a musical example Riel's lyrical vocal delivery, refer to Riel's final statement at his trial: Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, full score, 576-578 (Act 3, Scene 6).

¹⁹¹ Andrew Michael Zinck, "Theatrical Communication in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," (masters' thesis, University of Alberta, 1990), 65, ProQuest (MM64822), accessed 8 August 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/89130026?accountid=14656>.

¹⁹² Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 128.

¹⁹³ Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 128-129. Refer to Macdonald's lines in Act 2, Scene 5: Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 138 and 140 (lyrical persuasive singing) and 141-142 (rhythmic speech).

In *Louis Riel*, Somers also uses some elements of serialism as a method of musical organization, particularly as a means of character association.¹⁹⁴ For example, in the Church and Trial Scenes (Act 3, Scenes 3 and 6), Somers musically depict Riel's thoughts of his wife by using a tone row that closely resembles Marguerite's row in "Kuyas."¹⁹⁵

Ultimately, with *Louis Riel*, Somers created a great Canadian opera for it not only depicts an integral part of Canadian history but also preserves Canada's musical heritage through its integration of folk melodies. When describing his connection to the opera, Somers wrote that he "felt very deeply involved in the drama in relation to our country" and hoped that it would "help younger people to realize one day some of the excitement and depth of feeling that existed in the time Louis Riel."¹⁹⁶

3.2 List of Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Canadian Opera Company production of *Louis Riel* that premiered on 23 September 1967.¹⁹⁷

Louis Riel (Baritone)	Bernard Turgeon
Julie Riel, Riel's mother (Mezzo-soprano)	Patricia Rideout
Sara Riel, Riel's sister (Soprano)	Mary Morrison
Marguerite Riel, Riel's wife (Soprano)	Roxolana Roslak
Sir John A. Macdonald, Prime Minister (Baritone)	Cornelis Opthof

¹⁹⁴ Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 119.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 118 (Ex. 3.24).

¹⁹⁶ Harry Somers, "Discussing the Score," in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 10.

¹⁹⁷ The following cast list material has been gathered from Morey and Schabas, *Opera Viva*, 250. Somers did not identify any of the characters' voice types. The above voice classifications have been taken from Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto," 1266-1267. Note: due to Somers' style of vocal declamation, some roles should be performed in a completely spoken style, such as Thomas Scott, Charles Mair, and O'Donoghue. In the premiere, some performers played more than one character, and in subsequent productions, these character doublings changed.

Bishop Taché of Red River (Bass)	Joseph Rouleau
Sir George Etienne Cartier, Quebec's Lieutenant (Tenor)	Perry Price
William McDougall, Lieutenant Governor (Bass)	Howell Glynne
Colonel Garnet Wolseley (Bass)	Maurice Brown
General Sir Frederick Middleton (Tenor)	Ernest Atkinson
Thomas Scott, Orangeman (Tenor)	Thomas Park
O'Donaghue, Fenian Irishman (Tenor)	John Arab
Dr. Schultz (Baritone)	Peter Milne
Charles Mair, Canadian leader (Tenor)	Donald Saunders
Donald Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company (Tenor)	Ernest Atkinson
Gabriel Dumont, Saskatchewan Métis leader (Tenor)	Garnet Brooks
James Isbister, English-speaking Métis (Baritone)	Lloyd Dean
Poundmaker, Chief of the Crees (Bass)	Oskar Raulfs
Ambroise Lépine, Métis (Tenor)	André Lortie
Joseph Delorme, Métis (Baritone)	Jacques Lareau
Janvier Ritchot, Métis (Bass)	David Geary
Elzéar Goulet, Métis (Baritone)	Lloyd Dean
André Nault, Métis (Tenor)	Phil Stark
Elzéar Lagimodière, Métis (Baritone)	Donald Rutherford
Baptiste Lépine, Métis (Tenor)	Ermanno Mauro
Father Alexis André of Frog Lake, Saskatchewan (Tenor)	André Lortie
Wandering Spirit, War Chief of the Crees (Bass)	Herman Rombouts

Hudson's Bay Scout (Tenor)	Robert Jeffrey
Soldier (Baritone)	George Reinke
The Judge (Bass)	Maurice Brown
F.X. Lemieux, Riel's lawyer (Tenor)	John Arab
B.B. Osler, Prosecutor (Bass)	David Geary
Dr. François Roy (Tenor)	Robert Jeffrey
Clerk of the Court (Tenor)	Donald Saunders
Prison Guard (Baritone)	George Reinke
Conductor: Victor Feldbrill	
Director: Leon Major	

3.3 The Life of Louis Riel

Louis Riel (1844-1885), often referred to as “Manitoba’s founder,” was born in Saint-Boniface in the Red River Settlement to Métis chief, Louis Riel Sr. (1817-1864) and the first white-woman in the Northwest, Julie Lagimodière.¹⁹⁸ With the help of Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché (1823-1894), Riel studied to enter priesthood on scholarship at the Sulpician School in Montreal (1858). He excelled academically but returned home in 1868 after learning about his father’s death. In the following years, Riel challenged the Dominion of Canada’s westward expansion and fought for the rights of the Métis people in

¹⁹⁸ The following biographical information has been gathered from: Elina Macniven, “Visionary or Madman?,” originally published in the Canadian Opera Company’s souvenir program for *Louis Riel* (1967), reprinted in the liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 6; Lewis H. Thomas, “Riel, Louis (1844-85),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed 5 August 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/riels_louis_1844_85_11E.html; and George F. G. Stanley, “Louis Riel,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, ed. Adam Gaudry, 22 April 2013, accessed 5 August 2016, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/louis-riel/#h3_jump_4.

the Red River and North-West rebellions (1869 and 1885) as their charismatic and religiously devout leader.

In 1867, Canada's Confederation unified the Province of Canada (now Ontario and Quebec) with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In 1869, Britain's Hudson's Bay Company, which maintained control of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory (mostly the rest of what is now Canada), agreed to sell these lands to the Dominion of Canada without consulting or compensating its current inhabitants. The federal government planned on setting up a Crown Colony in which the people living there would have no citizenship rights. This angered the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement, which included British, French, Irish, and Métis settlers. In addition, the intrusion of the English-speaking and predominantly protestant Canadian government greatly concerned the Métis, who were devout Roman Catholics and the French-speaking descendants of the First Nations and French Canadians.

While waiting for the Queen's proclamation of the land transfer to Canada, Prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) sent William McDougall (1822-1905), the first Lieutenant Governor of the new territories, to the West to await for the proclamation south of the border in Minnesota. Macdonald also callously sent land surveyors to Red River, none of whom could speak French, and therefore, could not communicate with the Métis who felt threatened by their actions. McDougall, with his prejudice against the French Catholics and Métis people, impatiently tried to enter the territory with a forged proclamation in November 1869.

To defend their land in the face of the Canadian government's western expansion, the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement established a provisional government under

the Law of Nations, pledging allegiance to the Queen alone in hopes of negotiating better terms for joining Canada. Riel, being bilingual and having been educated in the East, was soon elected as their president. While he halted the surveyors and McDougall from entering the Red River Settlement, his men strategically overtook Upper Fort Garry (now Winnipeg) from the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Canadian government sent special commissioners to Red River including Donald A. Smith (1820-1914), chief representative of the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, to negotiate new conditions for Manitoba's Confederation. Meanwhile, a Métis court martial sentenced a troublesome and violent prisoner, Orangeman Thomas Scott to death. Scott's execution on 4 March 1870 outraged the large Protestant population in Ontario who demanded Riel's death in retribution.

The Manitoba Act passed on 12 May 1870 and the bilingual Province of Manitoba joined Canada. With this act, Riel had intended to step down and let Canada's Lieutenant Governor, A. G. Archibald serve as leader. However, before Archibald could reach Red River, MacDonald sent Colonel Garnet Wolseley and army of angry Protestant recruitments to Red River under the pretense of a "peaceful mission." Fortunately, Riel realized in time that the army aimed to capture him and fled Upper Fort Gary.

Eastern Canada remained divided over Riel; in Ontario he had a \$5,000 bounty on his head for Scott's murder, whereas in Quebec, they praised him as "a defender of the Roman Catholic faith and French culture in Manitoba."¹⁹⁹ From 1870-1879, Riel was twice elected and expelled from parliament (1873 and 1874). The federal government gave him

¹⁹⁹ Stanley, "Louis Riel."

amnesty as long as he remained out of “Her Majesty’s Dominions” for five years. Riel then suffered nervous breakdowns and went to a mental asylum in Beauport, Quebec.

From 1879-1883, Riel lived in exile in Sun River, Montana, becoming an American citizen and teaching school at Saint Peter’s Mission. In 1881, he married a Cree-speaking Métis woman, Marguerite Monet, and together they had three children.

In 1884, Riel returned to Canada with his family to help the Métis of Batoche Saskatchewan Valley assert their rights and maintain possession of their farmland. He drafted a “Revolutionary Bill of Rights,” in response to which the federal government sent out five hundred soldiers. On 18 March 1884, Riel and the Métis seized Batoche’s parish church. There, they formed a provisional government with Riel as its president and demanded that the Hudson’s Bay Company’s surrender Fort Carlton. This “North-West Rebellion” lasted two months but the Canadians eventually won and captured Riel.

On 6 July 1885, Riel was charged with treason. Macdonald, hoping for a quick conviction and execution in order to blame Riel for Canada’s unrest, arranged for the trial to be held in Regina instead of Manitoba, where Riel had fewer sympathizers.²⁰⁰ In addition, instead of having an equally bilingual, twelve-member jury with a superior court judge, due to Regina’s territorial procedures, Riel received only a six-member jury and a “stipendiary magistrate who held office at the pleasure of the federal government, and could be dismissed without cause at any time.”²⁰¹ Both the judge and jury spoke English. Riel’s lawyers, paid for by his supporters in Quebec, also seemed to handle his case inadequately.²⁰² They defended him on the grounds of insanity, yet never asked for

²⁰⁰ Thomas, “Riel, Louis (1844-85).”

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

dismissal based on this insanity. They also denied Riel the right to cross-examine witnesses even though he had more knowledge of their backgrounds. In addition, his lawyers never asked that his case be tried under the Canadian statute of 1868, which would have ruled that he receive life in prison rather than the death penalty, as with the antiquated English statute of 1352 under which he was tried.

Riel knew that his lawyers' insanity defense would "discredit his people's legitimate grievances against the Canadian government."²⁰³ Although his lawyers would not allow him to, Riel "wished to pursue a claim of self-defense [...] arguing that the Métis actions in both 1870 and 1885 were justifiable."²⁰⁴ His eloquent final statement "systematically dismantled his lawyers' insanity-defense strategy," which unfortunately, also resulted in his guilty conviction.²⁰⁵ The jury did recommend clemency yet the Canadian government did not grant any. His verdict was appealed and dismissed twice. Pressure from Quebec also delayed his execution to assess his mental state, yet bias among the examiners found him "excitable" rather than insane.²⁰⁶

Riel was hung on 16 November 1885. His death caused an outcry in Quebec and a "fundamental realignment in Canadian national politics," which resulted in the creation of the Parti National.²⁰⁷ In 1886, they won the provincial elections and the Liberal party ascended to power with Prime Minister, Wilfrid Laurier.

²⁰³ Thomas, "Riel, Louis (1844-85)."

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Stanley, "Louis Riel."

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Thomas, "Riel, Louis (1844-85)."

Today, Canadians view Riel as representing “bilingualism, multiculturalism, tolerance for difference, [and] a keen sense of social justice.”²⁰⁸ Since 2007, in Manitoba the 16th of November has become a public holiday to commemorate the life of Louis Riel.

3.4 Opera Synopsis

The opera depicts Louis Riel’s life during the Métis rebellions in Manitoba (1869) and Saskatchewan (1885) and begins on 13 November 1869 as William McDougall tries to enter and establish Canadian control over the Red River Settlement.

Act 1, Scene 1: At the United States-Canadian border, south of Fort Garry, the Métis prohibit McDougall and his men from entering the Red River Settlement. Thomas Scott, a “violently fanatic” Orangemen attacks the Métis and is taken prisoner.²⁰⁹

Act 1, Scene 2: Riel and his men have gained control of Fort Garry, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s headquarters. Riel prays for divine guidance when his men arrive from the frontier with Scott. Against the advice of his men, he frees Scott on the condition that he remain peaceful.

Act 1, Scene 3: In the Prime Minister’s office at the House of Commons in Ottawa, Bishop Taché meets with Sir John A. Macdonald, George Cartier, and Donald Smith, to relay the Métis’ wishes to become a province. Macdonald agrees to negotiate terms once Riel sends a delegation to Ottawa. However, Taché says in order for Riel to do so, Macdonald must first grant the Métis amnesty for taking up arms against the Canadian government. Macdonald verbally agrees, but once Taché leaves the room, he reveals his true intentions.

²⁰⁸ Stanley, “Louis Riel.”

²⁰⁹ “Synopsis,” in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, LP, 15.

He tells Smith to go convince Riel to come to Ottawa so that he can finally arrest him, as he says: “if we once get him here he’s a cooked goose.”²¹⁰

Act 1, Scene 4: At his mother’s home, Riel works on writing Manitoba’s constitution so that Taché can take it to Ottawa. When alone, Riel reflects on the psalm of David and has a vision from God in which he sees himself as the prophet, leading his people: “Je suis ... David.”²¹¹

Act 2, Scene 1: Back in Ottawa, Taché and Macdonald negotiate the terms of Manitoba’s entrance into the confederation. The two finally come to an agreement, and Macdonald promises Taché that the delayed amnesty will come. However, once alone with Cartier, Macdonald admits that he has no intention of granting the amnesty due to the upcoming election.

Act 2, Scene 2: After breaking his promise to Riel and taking up arms against the Métis, Scott has once again been taken prisoner at Fort Garry. The Métis council sentences him to death for treason. When Smith tries to reason with Riel, he answers: “I cannot let one foolish man stand in the way of a whole nation.”²¹²

Act 2, Scene 3: In Fort Garry, Riel’s men prepare Scott for his execution. Meanwhile, in the house, Julie and Sara, Riel’s mother and sister try to convince him to stop the execution. Riel remains steadfast, proclaiming that God himself guided his hand: “C’est Dieu lui-même qui a guidé ma main.”²¹³ They hear the firing squad’s shots as they execute Scott.

Act 2, Scene 4: At a railway depot in Toronto, Dr. John Schultz and Charles Mair arouse the Orangemen crowd to rally against Riel. To create a spectacle, they use fake

²¹⁰ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 65A.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 101.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 116.

props such as a vial of Scott's blood and bloodied ropes, which they claim Scott was bound. They collect donations and plan to repeat the performance at all the Orange Lodges to promote their cause.

Act 2, Scene 5: In Macdonald's office in Ottawa, the cabinet is split – as is Canada – with Quebec in support of the French catholic Métis and Ontario against the murderers of Thomas Scott. Macdonald only hopes to save the confederation and keep the Americans from annexing Manitoba. Colonel Wolseley wants to bring military action on Fort Garry, while Cartier warns that Quebec will retaliate if they do. Macdonald compromises and sends a “smallish force” to Manitoba to keep the peace until Governor Archibald arrives with the amnesty and Riel resigns as promised. Once Taché and Cartier leave, Macdonald tells Wolseley not to use violence until every peaceful means has been tried; however, he adds: “If these wretched half-breed will not then disband, upon my life I'll gladly give you a chance of glory and the risk of the scalping knife!”²¹⁴

Act 2, Scene 6: In the courtyard at Fort Garry, the Métis perform dances to the “Song of the Buffalo Hunt.” Riel reassures his people that the army from Ontario comes in peace, as Wolseley writes: ““Our mission is one of peace [...] and will afford protection to you all.”²¹⁵ However, Ambroise Lépine rushes in warning Riel that the approaching army sings, “We're going to hang Riel.”²¹⁶ A scout from the Hudson's Bay Company runs in telling Riel to flee: “The troops are in the city ... they're going to lynch you: they've gone mad! [...] I heard it from Colonel Wolseley briefing his officers.”²¹⁷ Riel accuses Taché of betraying him

²¹⁴ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 142.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-157, and 159.

to Ottawa, then, on Smith's advice, he flees. While Wolseley and his men take over Fort Garry, Taché realizes in anger that Smith and the Canadian government have betrayed him.

Act 3, Scene 1: In 1880, Riel lives in exile as a schoolteacher in Sun River, Montana. While his Cree wife, Marguerite, sings a lullaby to their baby, Riel anxiously reads a letter from Canada. A deputation arrives from Saskatchewan and to Marguerite's despair, Riel agrees to return to Canada and continue his mission to fight for the rights of his people.

Act 3, Scene 2: Riel and his people now block Macdonald's dream of building a railway through the West. In his office, MacDonald asks Taché to choose sides: the "Law, the Crown and God," or "the pagan Crees, half-breed traitors, and one man – a mad apostate, Louis Riel."²¹⁸ Taché grudgingly agrees to refuse the sacrament to any French Catholic that supports Riel as long as Macdonald does not send an army into Manitoba. In return, Macdonald promises to only send the police. However, once Taché leaves, Macdonald again goes back on his word and instructs General Middleton to have the militia ready to move on "twenty-four hour's notice."²¹⁹

Act 3, Scene 3: On 2 April 1885, Riel and his followers interrupt Father André's mass at a church in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan. Riel accuses the priest of supporting the enemy and says he will administer the sacraments himself. Calling himself, Louis "David" Riel, he tells the congregation about his mystical dream in which he sees an army coming from the East. The people regard Riel as a prophet and march out to battle against Middleton's approaching army.

²¹⁸ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 195.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

Battle Scene Interlude: Although the Métis won some victories, the Canadian military eventually defeats them in the Battle of Batoche on 12 May 1885, ending the North-West Rebellion.²²⁰

Act 3, Scene 4: In a courtroom in Regina, Riel is on trial for high treason. His lawyers from Quebec try to defend him on the grounds of insanity while the Crown aims to prove his guilt and sound state of mind. Riel keeps trying to defend himself and question the witnesses but the judge and his lawyers stop him. The courtroom adjourns for the day.

Act 3, Scene 5: In his cell, Riel prays to God. His mother visits him and comforts him by saying: “Ils ne peuvent rien contre toi: Tu es dans les bras de Dieu” (They can do nothing against you: You are in the arms of God).²²¹

Act 3, Scene 6: Back in the courtroom, the judge finally allows Riel to deliver his statement. Riel begs the jury to acquit him for whether sane or insane, he “fought an irresponsible government [...] a government gone mad!”²²² The prosecutor declines to address the jury, for with the eloquence of his speech, Riel had proven his own sanity.

Act 3, Scene 7: On 16 November 1885 on a street in Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Taché and Riel’s lawyer, F. X. Lemieux hurriedly plead with Macdonald for a reprieve. Meanwhile in a square in Regina, Riel calmly accepts his fate and recites the Lord’s Prayer with Father André. Macdonald refuses to stop the execution and echoes Riel’s own words: “I cannot let one foolish man stand in the way of a whole nation.”²²³

²²⁰ In the libretto, the date is written as 12 May 1884. This is an error and should be 1885. Refer to “Libretto,” in liner notes for Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, 34.

²²¹ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 259-260.

²²² Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, full score, 577.

²²³ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 271.

3.5 “Kuyas”

Somers originally composed “Kuyas” as a competition piece, commissioned by the International Institute of Music of Canada in April 1967. (Berandol Music Limited published this score as *Kuyas: For Voice, Flute, and Percussion*.²²⁴ It includes Somers’ performance notes and has been used as the basis for the adaptation in this anthology.) When Somers found himself unable to compose music for Marguerite’s aria and the French lullaby Moore had written for it, Somers decided to insert *Kuyas* in its place. From an interview with Roxolana Roslak, who premiered the role of Marguerite, and Barbara Chilcott, Somers’ wife, Richard Turp describes how Somers, “with time running out – and with the help of two bottles of champagne provided by his wife – finally decided to integrate *Kuyas*’ lullaby.”²²⁵ Because Somers had already begun writing *Louis Riel* when he wrote *Kuyas*, the song shares a similar vocal style to that of the Métis characters, allowing for its fluid integration into the opera.²²⁶

3.5.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of Marguerite would suit full lyric sopranos with ease in the upper *passaggio* and a strong middle register. Although the “Kuyas” has a very light accompaniment, singers need power in the middle register to evoke the excitement of the “hunt.” They also need great vocal agility and flexibility to navigate the many quick leaps and ornaments within this piece. The following number, a quintet in which Marguerite sings with Riel and the deputation, lies almost exclusively in the F#5-B5 range. Therefore,

²²⁴ Harry Somers, *Kuyas: For Voice, Flute, and Percussion* (Scarborough, Ontario: Berandol Music Limited, 1967).

²²⁵ Turp, “*Louis Riel*,” 26.

²²⁶ Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” 273.

singers must also have vocal ease in the upper register and the strength to sustain their voices throughout these difficult passages.²²⁷ “Kuyas” is a very musically and technically challenging aria and requires strong vocal technique, breath control, musicianship skills, and acting.

Range: C4-B#5. Somers scored the original version of *Kuyas*, which he also included in *Louis Riel*, for soprano. However, the notes he published in the Berandol *Kuyas* score state that other voice types may sing this piece on its own by modulating to “whatever range suits their voice best.”²²⁸ Somers suggests the following transpositions: a “coloratura could commence a fourth higher, alto a minor third lower, contralto a major fourth or fifth lower, tenors a tone lower, [...] baritones an octave lower than alto, and bass an octave lower than contralto.”²²⁹ He also notes that singers with a more limited range could substitute the E♭4 in m. 94 for an F4, and the C4 in m. 98 and 100 for an E4.²³⁰ However, sopranos planning to perform “Kuyas” for the purposes of an opera audition should sing this piece in the context of the opera and in the original key with no alterations to its range.

Character: Marguerite Monet *dit* Bellehumeur Riel (1861-1886) was born in White Horse Plains (now St. François Xavier, Manitoba) to a Quebecois man and a Cree woman from Fort Ellice (now St. Lazare, Manitoba).²³¹ Her family later moved to Montana to join the buffalo hunting trade in which Louis Riel took part while in exile there.

²²⁷ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 178-190 (Act 3, Scene 1).

²²⁸ Somers, *Kuyas*, ii.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ The following biographical information for Marguerite Riel has been gathered from: Lawrence J. Barkwell, “Heroines of the 1885 Resistance: Marguerite Monet dit Bellehumeur Riel,” *Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research: Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture*, published by Louis Riel Institute, 4 December 2009, accessed 13 August 2016, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/11740.Marguerite%20Monet%20dit%20Bellehumeur%20Riel.pdf>, 1.

Described as “soft spoken, quiet, patient [...] petite and quite attractive,” Marguerite married Riel in 1881.²³² Together they had three children, the youngest of which died while Riel awaited execution.²³³ Unlike in the opera, Marguerite and her children travelled with Riel to Saskatchewan in 1885 as they thought his visit would only be temporary and that they would eventually return to their lives in Montana.

Marguerite worshipped her husband and even stayed by his side during the Battle of Batoche until his surrender to Middleton’s forces. After the battle, she hid in the caves with her children waiting to hear from Riel. She stayed there until his brother, Joseph, came to take them to live with his mother in St. Boniface. Weakened by the loss of Riel and her youngest child, Marguerite died of tuberculosis in May 1886 and now rests next to her husband in St. Boniface.

Setting: (Act 3, Scene 1) In Marguerite’s only scene in the opera, she sings this aria as a lullaby to her baby. While she sings, Riel reads a letter that he received from Bishop Bourget in Montréal, asking him to return to Canada to help his people. After her aria, Marguerite asks Riel what the letter says and he explains to her that he must make a choice between staying with her and completing his “mission.” The deputation arrives and in the following quintet, Marguerite pleads with him: “Tu m’a promis de ne jamais partir” (You promised never to leave). However, Riel decides to depart, saying: “I have a mission. God calls me. I will go.”²³⁴

²³² Barkwell, “Heroines of the 1885 Resistance.”

²³³ Thomas, “Riel, Louis (1844-85).”

²³⁴ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 177 and 190.

3.5.2 Text and Translation

Somers outlines the form of the aria as an introduction with four sections (Figure 1).²³⁵ The Introduction borrows text and melodic material from the “Song of Skateen,” a Nisga’a mourning song for Skateen, the Nass River tribe’s Wolfhead chief.²³⁶ (See Section 3.5.3.) Inspired by the “extraordinarily beautiful” melody, Somers decided to use its opening motive as the basic structure on which he developed the whole piece.²³⁷ The rest of “Kuyas” is in Cree. For Sections 1-3, Somers uses words compiled from Rev. H. E. Hives’ *Cree Grammar* and Rev. F. G. Stevens’ *English-Cree Primer and Vocabulary*. For the final section, Somers includes an excerpt from Leonard Bloomfield’s translation of Coming Day, a Plains Cree First Nations’ story of “How Sweet-Grass Became Chief.”²³⁸ The Cree people represent one of the largest First Nations groups in North America and in “Kuyas,” Somers uses a Plains Cree dialect used throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

Figure 1: “Kuyas” English Translation²³⁹

Introduction (mm. 1-46)	
hano, â-o, yī-e, ī-e, â	(no specific meaning)
Sâkâstâo	It is sunrise
Section 1 (mm. 47-64)	
Numoowunaw.	It is fair wind.
Kēsamuneto,	Great spirit,

²³⁵ Refer to Section 3.5.5 for further discussion of the aria’s form. The form and following information regarding textual sources has been gathered from Somers, *Kuyas*, i.

²³⁶ Garfield, *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music*, 153.

²³⁷ Somers quoted from Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, *Kuyas*, sound recording, commentary and aria excerpt from the CBC Radio Broadcast of the Canadian Opera Company’s production, October 1967, in possession of Canadian Music Centre, Centrestreams, accessed 15 August 2016, https://www.musiccentre.ca/centrestreams/swf?mode=play_by&opt=id&id=18297.

²³⁸ Leonard Bloomfield, “Plains Cree Texts,” *American Ethnological Society Publications* 16 (1934), 26-29, accessed 13 August 2016, https://ia800308.us.archive.org/27/items/rosettaproject_crk_vertxt-2/rosettaproject_crk_vertxt-2.pdf.

²³⁹ Used with permission from the Canadian Music Centre and Ms. Barbara Chilcott, the following text and English translations have been taken from: Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

Numoowunootāo. Kēsamuneto, Numoowunasāo.	He walks with fair wind. Great spirit, He sails with fair wind.
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Section 2 (mm. 65-92)

“Kēsamuneto, ka kesika’k ne-yu ka notāutāyan ne ku machen.	“Great spirit, now that it is day I who am hungry Will hunt.
---	---

Ka kesika’k Ne-yu ka notāutāyan ne ku machen – muskwâ.	Now that it is day I who am hungry will hunt – bear.
Ka kesika’k ne-yu ka notāutāyan – âmisk	Now that it is day I who am hungry – beaver
Ka kesika’k – mooswâ	Now that it is day – moose
Ne-yu – wâpoos	I – rabbit
Ka – uppische moos-soos notāutāyan ²⁴⁰ – âhtik.	Who – jumping deer am hungry – caribou.
Ka, ka kesika’k ne-yu ka notāutāyan ne ku machen – wâwâskāsēo.”	Now that it is day I who am hungry will hunt – elk.”

Section 3 (mm. 93-103)

Kēsamuneto Pu’kisimoo Mēkisāo	Great spirit Sunset An eagle.
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Section 4 (mm. 104-124)

Kuyas, kuyas. Āwuko ā ke okimawit kuyas kisāyīnewu. Āwuko kuyas achimoowin. Āwuko o tu uskek ka pā’tuman	Long ago, long ago. That one was a chief long ago among old men. This is an old story. This In this land is what I heard
--	--

²⁴⁰ This word was misspelled in the notes of the Berandol score and has been corrected here.

omu achimoowin.
Kuyas,
 kuyas
Āwuko ā ke okimawit
kuyas.

this story.
Long ago,
 long ago
That one was a chief
 long ago.

3.5.3 “Song of Skateen”

About a month before the opening of its 2017 production of *Louis Riel*, the Canadian Opera Company was informed by Dr. Dylan Robinson, the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts at Queen’s University, that the lament melody on which Somers based the “Kuyas” aria is in fact a Nisga’a mourning song, the “Song of Skateen.” Somers used this melody “without knowledge of Nisga’a protocol that dictates that such songs must only be sung at the appropriate times, and only by those who hold the hereditary rights to sing such songs.”²⁴¹ Robinson explains that, “To sing mourning songs in other contexts is a legal offence for Nisga’a people and can also have negative spiritual impacts upon the lives of singers and listeners.”²⁴² The current hereditary rights holder of the “Song of Skateen” is Sim’oogit Sg at’iin, hereditary chief Isaac Gonu, Gisk’ansnaat (Grizzly Bear Clan), Gitlax t’aamiks, BC.²⁴³

From 1880-1951, under Section 3 of the Indian Act, it was illegal for First Nations people to perform their own songs and dances: “Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the ‘Potlatch’ ... is guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment ...”²⁴⁴ Due to this censorship and in

²⁴¹ Dylan Robinson, Wal’aks Keane Tait, and Goothl Ts’imilx Mike Dangeli, “The Nisga’a History of the ‘Kuyas’ Aria,” in “Canadian Opera Company - Program Spring 2017: *Louis Riel* and *Tosca*,” 15, accessed 21 May 2017, http://files.coc.ca/pdfs/Spring%202017%20Program.pdf?_sp=9f480d37e86633fd.1495407192765.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions.”

²⁴⁴ Quoted in Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions.”

hopes to safeguard their songs for future generations, many First Nations in the early twentieth century were “convinced” by ethnographers to allow their songs to be recorded.²⁴⁵ However, as Robinson points out, they did not realize that “their songs might also become ‘pinned down’ in contemporary compositions like Louis Riel without their consent.”²⁴⁶

In regards to Somers use of the “Song of Skateen,” Alexander Neef, the General Director of the Canadian Opera Company, explains how Somers, who wrote the opera in a time more heavily coloured by colonial mentalities, must have “viewed the music as folk material ‘no different from the way Bartok would have collected the songs of Transylvania and integrated them into his work.’”²⁴⁷ In fact, Somers justified his use of a Tsimshian melody – now known to be a Nisga’a song – for a Métis woman singing in Cree – by claiming the “case of the composer’s legitimate interest in certain musical materials overriding concerns of cultural authenticity.”²⁴⁸ The Canadian Opera Company’s 2017 production took great care to address issues of cultural appropriation in this piece by respecting “how the songs of one nation are not the same as another’s”²⁴⁹ and understanding that songs carry great meaning as Peter Hinton, the director explains:

A song that is collected from the Nisga’a nation is a sacred song. Songs to the Nisga’a, as I can share with you not authoritatively from my own listening and my own teachings, are laws. Songs carry great spiritual energy within them. They are not just tunes. They are hard for western people to identify with because they’re not objects, we don’t see them the way you can see a mask, or a totem pole, or something that is visual. And we know full well in this room the abuses of that. So it’s much more than an issue about appropriation, it’s an issue about laws, and how we respect the Nisga’a

²⁴⁵ Robinson, Tait, and Dangeli, “The Nisga’a History of the ‘Kuyas’ Aria,” 15.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Cooper, “Canada Turns 150, But a Silent Chorus Isn’t Celebrating.”

²⁴⁸ Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” 273.

²⁴⁹ Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions.”

nation as a people with laws that hold. [...] [A] song doesn't belong to one person, that songs are of the spirit, they are of the land. And it's not about owning and that there has to be ongoing human dialogue about them.²⁵⁰

It should be noted that in aspiration to “revise the opera’s colonial biases,” the Canadian Opera Company made numerous changes to bring a “contemporary perspective” to *Louis Riel*, which include the addition of Michif spoken dialogue (the official Métis language) and a silent chorus, referred to as the “Land Assembly,” performed by Indigenous performers who “silently bear witness” to the events of the opera.²⁵¹

On 19 April 2017, a day before the Canadian Opera Company’s opening performance of *Louis Riel*, Robinson hosted a meeting to “discuss First Nations song protocol and the use of Indigenous songs in Canadian compositions, such as Harry Somers’ *Louis Riel*.”²⁵² Invited attendees included members of the Nisga’a, Métis and other First Nations arts and music communities, members of the 2017 *Louis Riel* production, and representatives of the Canadian Opera Company, National Arts Centre, Canadian Music Centre, and Canada Council for the Arts, and Moore and Somers’ estates.²⁵³ At this meeting, discussions involved the possible inclusion or exclusion of the “Kuyas” aria as well as “begin[ing] the process of developing policy related to Indigenous protocol for new music involving Indigenous participants, and music that misuses Indigenous song.”²⁵⁴ In a news release statement announcing the meeting, the Canadian Opera Company writes: “The purpose of

²⁵⁰ “Roundtable - Collaborations: Indigenous Art and Western Art Forms,” performance by Joanna Burt, introduction by Katherine Semcesen, discussion with Peter Hinton, Estelle Shook, Marie Clements, and Paula Danckert, in “Canadian Opera Company: Hearing Riel,” YouTube video, 7:04:22, posted by “Innis College,” 21 April 2017, accessed 21 May 2017, 2:12:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrCP1bm2TPQ>.

²⁵¹ Nigel Hunt, “New Version of *Louis Riel* Opera Emphasizes Indigenous Roles and Languages,” *CBC News*, 18 April 2017, accessed 21 May 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/louis-riel-canadian-opera-company-1.4074163>.

²⁵² Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions.”

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the April 19 consultation event is not to reach a conclusive decision, but to open a dialogue between relevant parties and organizations that will clarify these issues in the future.”²⁵⁵

In the end, the “Kuyas” aria was kept in the Canadian Opera Company production, however, it is still under discussion with the Nisga’a matriarch whether the aria may be performed in future productions and whether or not it may be sung independently as a stand-alone aria.²⁵⁶ In order to respect the Nisga’a peoples hereditary rights to this song, the digitalized “Kuyas” adaptation has been omitted from the anthology and most musical examples refer to either the Berandol “Kuyas” score or the *Louis Riel* vocal score, accessible through the Canadian Music Centre.

3.5.4 Pronunciation Guide

With the aid of Mrs. Lou Waller, a Cree First Nations from Alberta to whom he dedicated the song, Somers created the following pronunciation guide.²⁵⁷ He chose to use phonetic approximations from Hives’ and Stevens’ books on Cree grammar rather than symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as he felt they would better demonstrate Cree’s “subtle nuances” and “be most easily adaptable to persons unfamiliar with the language.”²⁵⁸ However, Somers later stated in an interview that due to a performer’s mispronunciation of the words, he had considered revising the phonetics according to IPA symbols.²⁵⁹ The following pronunciation guide combines Somers’ phonetic approximations with IPA symbols to give singers a clearer understanding of the Cree diction:

²⁵⁵ Pugsley, “Media Release: Dialogue on Use of Indigenous Songs in Canadian Compositions.”

²⁵⁶ “Roundtable - Collaborations: Indigenous Art and Western Art Forms,” in “Canadian Opera Company: Hearing Riel,” YouTube video.

²⁵⁷ Somers, *Kuyas*, i.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Buckler, “The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 41-42.

Figure 2: “Kuyas” Pronunciation Guide²⁶⁰

Phonetic approximation		IPA Symbol
a	mat	[æ]
ā	mate	[eɪ]
â	far	[ɑ:]
e	meet	[i:]
ē	met	[ɛ]
i	mitt	[ɪ]
ī	mite	[aɪ]
o	mote	[oʊ]
oo	moot	[u:]
u	mutt	[ʌ]
h	chair	[h]
Consonants have the same pronunciation as in English: w, p, t, k, y, s, m, n		

Based on Roxolana Roslak’s performances of “Kuyas,” singers should stay on the first vowel of the diphthongs (ā, ī, o) for as long as possible and lightly add the second vowel at the end of the note’s duration (Ex. 12).²⁶¹ With “stā” in m. 28, singers should switch to the second diphthong vowel, [ɪ] on the thirty-second note D# (Ex. 12). In addition, singers can change the text underlay for m. 40 to match that of m. 18 as the vowel changes may help to navigate the downward leaps (Ex. 13).

A note to singers: the pronunciation of “hano” ([hæno]) in the Introduction does change to “hâno” ([ha:no]) in mm. 42 and 44.

²⁶⁰ Used with permission from the Canadian Music Centre and Ms. Barbara Chilcott, this pronunciation guide has been taken from: Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

²⁶¹ Refer to Roslak’s performance of “Kuyas” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD; and Roxolana Roslak and Stuart Hamilton, *Kuyas*, sound recording, recorded at the University of Regina, 1978, in possession of Canadian Music Centre, Centrestreams, accessed 15 August 2016, https://www.musiccentre.ca/centrestreams/swf?mode=play_by&opt=id&id=21000.

3.5.5 Performance and Interpretive Notes

In “Kuyas” and throughout the opera, Somers integrates borrowed folk songs seamlessly into his own musical style. As he describes it: “I sort of jazzed them up in contemporary terms you might say.”²⁶² For the First Nations folk songs, Somers strives to emulate their improvisatory and free performance style. Lillian Buckler suggests that Somers achieves this by elaborating on the folk songs with highly ornamented melodic lines, textual repetition, and a free rhythmical style through the use of different meters and rhythm.²⁶³

The melodic characteristics of Somers’ folk song style can be heard throughout “Kuyas” with its textual repetition and in Marguerite’s frequent grace notes, ornaments, and glissandi (mm. 27-28). The accompanying flute also uses similar short, melismatic patterns. These melodic elaborations not only emulate the stylistic characteristics of First Nations music but as New York Times critic, Raymond Ericson describes, they “contribute to a distinct melodic style and heighten the emotional impact.”²⁶⁴ Singers should pay close attention to Somers’ articulation and dynamics as he carefully specifies details such as slurs, accents, staccati, and sometimes, all of the above combined. He also includes tenuto markings above notes to indicate “a stress about half way between normal and an accent” (m. 40).²⁶⁵ Singers should strive to create these accents and staccati with their breath rather than tensing their throats for this will tire the voice. Singers should also lengthen the glissandi (mm. 38, 102, 120, and 123) and sing them slowly in a “steady and continuous”

²⁶² Somers quoted from Davies, “Interview with Harry Somers and Mavor Moore,” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, extra features.

²⁶³ Buckler, “The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 81-82.

²⁶⁴ Raymond Ericson, *New York Times*, quoted in Jean Frances Smith, “An Analysis of Selected Works by Harry Somers” (master’s thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1973), microfilm, 85.

²⁶⁵ Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

manner as Somers specifies.²⁶⁶ In particular, singers should exaggerate these effects with the longer descending glissandi in mm. 102 and 120-121.

During the 1960's and 1970's, Somers took a keen interest in vocal experimentation, especially in regards to "phonetic sounds, timbral inflections, and minute ornamentation."²⁶⁷ In *Louis Riel*, Somers reflects these interests through his use of various vocal declamatory styles to delineate characters. He also became drawn to the "disappearing sounds of various peoples," and in "Kuyas," Somers continues this exploration of vocal techniques to achieve new sounds.²⁶⁸ For example in Section 1 (mm. 51-56), he specifies the mouth shape singers should use: "mouth almost closed" and "open." In the following, Somers describes the sound he tries to achieve with this:

The principles behind a lot of North American Indian singing which is to be non-fluid, or to be imitation of wildlife, or to be a very personal expression of some of the tribes, uses a manner of vocal production which would go towards the nasal, the falsetto, and so forth.²⁶⁹

In "Kuyas," singers should venture to discover a new flexibility in their voices by going beyond the traditional classical technique. In doing so, they may achieve a wider range of expression and allow themselves greater freedom to emulate the expressive sounds of First Nations music. For example, singers should strive for a pure, very focused tone with minimal vibrato that hits the center of every pitch. However, in the higher range, singers should increase their vibrato to avoid any shrillness and to obtain a beautiful, warm tone. Singers may add [h]'s to clearly articulate ornamented notes and accents on sustained vowels. They may also use [h]'s to further delineate notes in a stepwise melody as Roslak

²⁶⁶ Somers, *Kuyas*, 1.

²⁶⁷ Zinck, "Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers," 6.

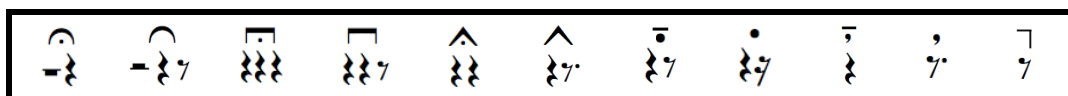
²⁶⁸ Houghton, "The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers," 52.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

does throughout her performance of the aria (Ex. 14).²⁷⁰ As long as singers maintain the intent of the line, they may also take breaths freely throughout phrases – especially before accented grace notes in order to articulate them clearly (m. 18).²⁷¹

To give the illusion of the improvisatory qualities of First Nations music, Somers frequently shifts meters throughout Sections 1, 2, and 4, creating the feel of an unstructured and flowing meter. In the unmetred Introduction and Section 3, Somers uses eleven different types of fermatas. In his notes to the Berandol *Kuyas* score, he included the following guide to indicate the relative durations of each fermata:

Figure 3: Somers' Use of Fermatas in "Kuyas"²⁷²



Somers does note that “If the performer wishes, he or she may use the fermata strictly as indicated, or freely, using the fermata as only relative indicators, the exact duration of which will depend on the performers’ feeling and sensibility during the moment of performance.”²⁷³ To aid singers, the corresponding durations of the Somers’ fermatas have been including underneath their symbols in the adapted score.²⁷⁴

Based on Roslak’s performance, singers may also take more rhythmic freedom in the sung phrases of the unmetred sections.²⁷⁵ These sections may seem difficult to count as many of these measures contain partial beats. Rather than getting bogged down by

²⁷⁰ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Act 3, Scene 1: “Kuyas;” and Roslak and Hamilton, *Kuyas*.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Used with permission from the Canadian Music Centre and Ms. Barbara Chilcott, the fermata symbols have been taken from Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

²⁷³ Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

²⁷⁴ Adaptation has been removed. (See Section 3.5.3)

²⁷⁵ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Act 3, Scene 1: “Kuyas;” and Roslak and Hamilton, *Kuyas*.

counting with an eighth-note tactus, singers may find it easier to count in quarter notes. In this manner, they would regard the rhythm loosely in terms of rounding up and down to the nearest quarter note and not have to worry so much about trying to precisely fit in the added ornaments. For example, the dotted quarter notes can be sung as elongated quarters (mm. 14-16) and beats with tied eighth notes can be slightly lengthened (mm. 2-3). Singers can also round fermatas down the nearest quarter note and use their breath to fill in the time of the sixteenth rests such as in mm. 12 and 14.

For Somers, “the center, focus, and determining factor for the unifying characteristic of his songs is the words.”²⁷⁶ Therefore, in “Kuyas” he organizes the aria’s musical form around its textural structure (Figure 1). The Introduction and four sections each have its own tempo marking: *Molto Lento*, *Più Mosso*, *Allegro (Molto)/Presto*, and *Molto Lento* (Sections 3-4). The sorrowful texts of the slower Introduction and closing sections (Sections 3-4) create the affect of a soothing lullaby, while the faster middle sections (Sections 1-2) portray the excitement of a hunt.

As in the “Song of Skateen,” the introduction of “Kuyas” features expressive, syllables set to “sighing” musical gestures that portray the sorrows of a lament: “hano, â-o, yī-e, ī-e, and â” (mm. 20, 30, and 44).²⁷⁷ (These syllables do not form words and serve largely as sounds for the sighs.) In addition, many of these gestures feature a tenuto on the first note to further emphasize this “sighing” effect. Laments express grief and function to comfort and console those who suffer from loss.²⁷⁸ Therefore, the lament texts of the

²⁷⁶ Houghton, “The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers,” 54.

²⁷⁷ Buckler, “The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 42.

²⁷⁸ James Porter, “Lament,” in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 3 September 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/15902>.

Introduction and Sections 3-4 also serve to create a soothing affect that lends itself to the aria's lullaby setting. In this context, the isolated syllables emulate humming. Singers can also channel the deep emotion expressed in a lament to communicate Marguerite's love for her child.

Laments and lullabies also share similar vocal mannerisms. James Porter describes how lamenting vocal mannerisms "often parallel[...] such genres as the lullaby, especially when an improvisatory style is used" and, as previously discussed, Somers features this improvisatory vocal style in his setting of "Kuyas" lament texts.²⁷⁹ The slow tempi and free rhythmic style in the Introduction and Section 3-4 also lend to the calming affect of a lullaby. Singers can enhance these lullaby qualities by emphasizing the "sighing" musical gestures that mimic the rocking of a baby. Carefully following the marked dynamics and making use of the frequent *crescendi* and *diminuedi* will also help singers to depict this gentle swaying.

In Sections 1-2, the increase in tempi and musical density, along with the syncopated rhythmic patterns between the voice and the accompaniment serve to depict the thrill of the hunt. This aria has very few words yet it has great musical detail. Therefore, it may help singers to imagine themselves a larger narrative for this piece given the information about the text, the opera, and character, in order to impart greater meaning and emotion to the music. One possibility is that during the hunting text, Marguerite dreams of the future where her son becomes a great hunter, providing for his people and leading them like his father. In Sections 1-2, the voice emphasizes a single pitch while the flute features the repetition of a single note in decreasing rhythmic values. This drives the

²⁷⁹ Porter, "Lament."

rhythm forward and accentuates a sense of anticipation and excitement (Ex. 15). The repeated notes also portray Marguerite getting lost in her thoughts, as if in a trance. In fact, the voice part in Section 2 is almost solely comprised of the repeated A4 notes with numerous added accents (m. 65-86). At the *accelerando* (mm. 87-89), this line ascends to a repeated B4 pitch. Within these sections, singers should exaggerate their consonants, such as the many [k] and [t] sounds, to accentuate the increased rhythmic activity (mm. 65-67).

The staging in the CBC TV production demonstrates how this frenetic “hunting” music also serves to portray Marguerite’s concern for Riel as she notices his agitation in reading the letter.²⁸⁰ In the production, Marguerite sits by the cradle during the Introduction and rocks her baby. However, as the music changes in Sections 1-2, she takes the baby out of the cradle and walks around, bouncing him gently up and down. While doing so, Marguerite notices Riel’s distress and makes many furtive glances towards him as he contemplates the letter.

Section 3 returns to the improvisatory and lamenting style of the Introduction with its unmetred and unaccompanied line, frequent grace notes, fermatas, and *molto lento* tempo. This introspective music helps depict the text’s meaning of worshipping or praying to a god: “Great spirit, sunset” (mm. 93-101). Then the melodic line in m. 102 ascends up to a sustained high B#5 to depict the soaring of the “Mêkisão” (an eagle). The note is the climax of Marguerite’s vision, which has been growing in intensity throughout Sections 1-2. The glissando that follows should be sung long and slowly as if to portray Marguerite’s sudden realization that the future she dreams for her son will never come to be. Although Somers’ phrasing in m. 102 seems to indicate a breath before “-são,” taking a breath

²⁸⁰ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Act 3, Scene 1.

afterwards is less disruptive to the overall line. In addition, this way, the word “Mēkisāo” stays in tact and the phrasing follows the punctuation of the text.

Section 4 blends together the quick repetitive notes of the middle sections (Sections 1-2) with the glissandi of the slower sections (Introduction and Section 3) (Ex. 16).²⁸¹ Here, the tenor and bass drum reappear after only playing a few measures in the Introduction. Compared with the flute and sleigh-bell accompaniment, the drums play a much simpler line to support the melody. Somers derives the text of this section from the final part of Coming Day’s story in which he recalls a tale from “long ago” about how a brave man became a great chief.²⁸² He describes the text as “rather haunting, [it] sums up a kind of lament for the passing of a people, or at least their great freed days.”²⁸³ Cooper also suggests that “the dirge may be regarded as a lament for the passing of native traditions – the end of the buffalo hunt.”²⁸⁴

Although Marguerite sings this aria as a lullaby, the text, which mourns the passing of a chief, also foreshadows Riel’s death as the brave leader of his people.²⁸⁵ In later scenes, Somers incorporates musical material from “Kuyas” to show Riel’s connection to Marguerite.²⁸⁶ For example, in the Church Scene (Act 3, Scene 3), Riel adopts Marguerite’s ornamental style and quotes her “sighing” musical gestures (mm. 20, 30, and 44).²⁸⁷ In

²⁸¹ Buckler, “The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 48.

²⁸² Bloomfield, “Plains Cree Texts,” 29.

²⁸³ Houghton, “The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers,” 101.

²⁸⁴ Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1283.

²⁸⁵ Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” 273.

²⁸⁶ Zinck, “Theatrical Communication in Harry Somers’ Opera *Louis Riel*,” 67.

²⁸⁷ Riel quotes Marguerite’s “i-e” motive in m. 26 of “Kuyas,” respelled as “ai-ee” in Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 215-216 and 218 (Act 3, Scene 3).

addition, throughout his trial defence (Act 3, Scene 6), Riel outlines melodic material from “Kuyas” (mm. 14-16).²⁸⁸

Sections 1 and 2, the main accompanied sections, contain extremely challenging rhythms with frequently changing meters and fast tempi. Roslak performs Section 1 around ♩ = 95-105 and Section 2 around ♩ = 140-160 (she sings these sections at a much quicker tempo with piano accompaniment than with the ensemble, hence the range in tempi above).²⁸⁹ However, Roslak’s tempi are fast and challenging; therefore, singers should perform Sections 1-2 at a tempo in which they can accurately sing the ornamented passages (mm. 53 and 57-58).

For the most part, because of these quick tempi, singers should count Sections 1-2 in quarter notes and view the thirty-second notes as grace notes to the following beats (Ex. 17). With these fast ornamental notes, singers should relax their voice as if singing trills and use their breath to change the notes quickly. As a suggestion for Ex. 17, singers may find it easier to eliminate the tied, F♯ sixteenth note (m. 57) and place the word “moo” on the second beat so that they do not fall rhythmically behind.

In the passages set in 5/8 and 7/8 in Sections 1-2, singers should follow an eighth-note tactus and subdivide into groups of two or three eighth notes according to Somers’ accents (Ex. 18). In other instances where there are no accents, they should group the eighth notes according to the notated vocal rhythms (Ex. 19-21). In m. 55, singers should avoid counting the bar in 5/8 as subdividing into eighth notes will be problematic in

²⁸⁸ For examples of Riel’s music borrowing melodic material from “Kuyas,” refer to Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, full score, 576 (Act 2, Scene 6) “I believe I have a mission,” and 578 “I leave the verdict in God’s hands.” The “Kuyas” material (E-B-D♯-E♯) is transposed and written as (B-F♯-A♯-C). Refer to Cooper, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto,” 1334.

²⁸⁹ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Act 3, Scene 1: “Kuyas;” and Roslak and Hamilton, *Kuyas*.

regards to the triplet rhythm. Instead, they may find it easier to think of the $2/4 + 1/8$ meter as two quarter notes followed by a quick breath (Ex. 19). In general, when learning the rhythms in Sections 1-2, singers may find it helpful to rewrite some of the measures in a way that clearly shows the quarter note beat (Ex. 22).

In Section 1, singers should ensure to check in with the conductor, or in absence of a conductor, they may have to conduct the instrumentalists with their breath. The start of the following phrases could serve as check points for the ensemble: mm. 55, 57, and 60. Since the rhythm and vocal line in Section 2 is much simpler, the ensemble should stay together more easily. Singers should instead focus on not rushing and carefully placing their syncopated beats. When singing with an ensemble and without a conductor, Somers states that “the soloist will have to indicate by sign or gesture, when the percussionists are to play in the opening section and at the commencement of [Section] 4. If there is no conductor, the singer will have to perform the duty of indicating each tempo change.”²⁹⁰ The conducting cues occur at the start of mm. 29 and 104.²⁹¹

Somers sets most of the aria *a cappella* or to percussion accompaniment, which may cause singers to feel exposed and lead them to rush through rests. Instead, singers should take advantage of the rests and fermatas in the unaccompanied sections to think ahead for their next pitch. They should also have the courage to take time and enjoy the contrast of silence in this piece. Some of the most difficult intervals occur after rests on downward leaps to the start of the next phrase for these notes suddenly feel too low in the voice. In these situations, singers may find it useful to think of inverting the interval upwards then transposing it down the octave. For example, to find the G4 in m. 24 after singing the high

²⁹⁰ Somers, *Kuyas*, iii.

²⁹¹ Somer and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 172 and 175 (Act 3, Scene 1: “Kuyas”).

F#5 in m. 22, singers could think of going up a semitone to G5 then lowering down to the G4 rather than trying to sing a descending major seventh interval. Although the flute gives out pitches in Sections 1 and 2, these often sound in close dissonance to the vocal line to add to the tension of the hunt (mm. 55-56). If their pitch wanders, singers should try to maintain the relative intervals of the melodic line and continue on. Performers should also carefully observe key signatures as Somers simply uses them to indicate accidentals rather than actual keys.²⁹²

Although Somers scored “Kuyas” for flute and percussion accompaniment, he does state “that it had been performed effectively with, piano, and flute. The pianist simulated the percussive effects on the piano.”²⁹³ Because Somers had an interest in the using the piano in unconventional ways, pianists could try knocking on the wood of the piano or on the bench to imitate the percussion.²⁹⁴ In the piano-vocal score, Somers suggests that with the exclusion of the flute part, the pianist “use [the piano’s] surfaces only” and “experiment with palm, fingers, sticks etc.”²⁹⁵ However, Somers may have written these instructions for rehearsal purposes as he still scored the aria for flute and drums in the piano-vocal score.

In any case, using only the piano’s surfaces to simulate percussive effects may not create sufficient volume for a recital hall or other larger venues. In such performances, the pianist may wish to emulate the percussive effects by playing pitches on the piano. This would create more volume to support the singer, and if the singer has difficulty finding certain pitches, the pianist could integrate them into the percussion part.

²⁹² For example in Section 1, the flute’s key signature indicates A \flat and B \flat (mm. 47-64), and the voice part has F \sharp , C \sharp , E \sharp , and D \sharp (mm. 51-64). In Section 2, the flute has a C \sharp (mm. 68-92).

²⁹³ Houghton, “The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers,” 102.

²⁹⁴ For information on Somers interest in the unconventional use of the piano, refer to Houghton, “The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers,” 22-23.

²⁹⁵ Somers and Moore, *Louis Riel*, vocal score, 172 (Act 3, Scene 1).

In pianist Stuart Hamilton’s performance of “Kuyas” with Roslak, he plays octave chords to simulate the tenor and bass drum in the Introduction and Section 4 (Ex. 23).²⁹⁶ In Sections 1 and 2, he uses high two-to three-note clusters for the sleigh bells and plays the flute melody as written (Ex. 24). However, once the vocal line takes focus in Sections 1 and 2, Hamilton quickly drops the sleigh-bells part and continues only with the flute melody. He omits the part of the Medium Tom Toms in Section 2.

As a general note to singers, this song may at first seem like a daunting task to learn. However, if approached one layer at a time, it becomes a much easier task. Singers should learn the rhythms, words, and pitches separately, then slowly combine the pitches with the rhythm, and lastly, add the words.

Ex. 12 Diphthong vowel placement, m. 28.²⁹⁷

The musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), F#3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter). There are dynamic markings *ff* above the first measure, *ffp* above the second measure, and *ff* above the third measure. A fermata is placed over the final note. Below the staff, the phonetic transcription is: [kɑ:] [ste] [o] [o] [ou] - [ɑ:]. A '3' is written below the first three notes of the second measure.

²⁹⁶ Hamilton’s interpretation of the Kuyas accompaniment has been gathered from Roslak and Hamilton, *Kuyas*.

²⁹⁷ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “Kuyas” adaptation and used with permission from the Canadian Music Centre and Ms. Barbara Chilcott.

Ex. 13 Suggested word placement for m. 40 to match that of m. 18.

(m. 18) (m. 40)

Ex. 14 Suggested [h]'s, mm. 21-22.

ha - no [h] [h] o [h]

Ex. 15 Repeated notes with decreasing rhythmic values, mm. 49-52.

(Mouth almost closed.)

Voice

Flute

S. B.

Ex. 16 Section 4, mm. 107-108.

Voice *p* *gliss.*
 Ā-wu-ko ā ke o-kim-a-wit Ku yas
 T. D. 7 5

Ex. 17 Quick leaps and ornamental patterns in the vocal line, mm. 57-59.

Voice *f*
 Nu moo wu noo tā - o tā - o tā - o
 Flute *p* *f*
 S. B. *f* 4 3 2

Ex. 18 Suggested counting, mm. 87-89.

Voice 1 2 | 1 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 2 3
 Ka, ka ke - si - ka'k ne - yu ka no - tā - ut - āy - an ne ku mach - en
 Flute 6 6
 T. T. *p cresc.*
 S. B. *p cresc.* 7 7 5

Ex. 19 Suggested counting, mm. 54-55.

1 2 | 1 2 3 | 1 2

1 2 + 1/8

1 2 + 1/8

3 3

3 3

p

p

p

Ex. 20 Suggested counting, m. 61.

1 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 2

Nu moo

3

tr

Ex. 21 Suggested counting, mm. 77-79.

1 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 2 3

no-tā-ut-āy-an â _____ misk. Ka-ke - si-ka'k

6 6

Ex. 22 Suggested rhythmic notation, m. 62.

wu _____ na _____ tā _____

3 >

pf

Ex. 23 Piano simulation of the tenor and bass drum, mm. 29-34.²⁹⁸

Ex. 24 Piano simulation of the sleigh bells and flute, mm. 46-52.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ This musical example has been created by the author based on Hamilton's interpretation of the percussion and sleigh-bells accompaniment in Roslak and Hamilton, *Kuyas*.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

4. *FILUMENA*

4.1 Background

Commissioned by Calgary Opera and The Banff Centre as a co-production on a \$1.3 million dollar budget, John Estacio and John Murrell's *Filumena* performed to sold-out audiences for all six of its shows. At its premiere on 1 February 2003, the opera received what *The National Post* reviewer, Kenneth DeLong referred to as "the longest and most sustained ovation [he had] seen in more than 25 years."³⁰⁰ Many critics predicted the opera's continuing success as *Variety*'s Iris Winston proclaimed: "There are some 80 made-in-Canada operas in existence. *Filumena* is likely to be the one best remembered and performed most often worldwide."³⁰¹

Filumena has since lived up to its praises by becoming the most-produced Canadian opera. It has received productions by Calgary Opera (2003 and 2017), The Banff Centre (2003 and 2005), The National Arts Centre (2005), and Edmonton Opera (2005), as well as excerpted performances by The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (2004), Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra (2005), Prince Edward Island Symphony (2007) Okanagan Symphony Orchestra (2008), and The National Arts Centre Orchestra (2008).³⁰² The opera has been nationally broadcasted on CBC Television (2006) and featured on CBC Radio's "Saturday Afternoon at the Opera" (2003 & 2006). To add to its list of successes, *Filumena* has won numerous awards including the 2006 AMPA Awards (Alberta Film and Television

³⁰⁰ Quoted in John Estacio, "Filumena Program Notes," JohnEstacio.com, accessed 22 May 2016, <http://www.johnestacio.com/filumena.asp#notes>.

³⁰¹ Iris Winston, "Review: *Filumena*," *Variety*, 11 May 2005, accessed 22 May 2016, <http://variety.com/2005/legit/reviews/filumena-5-1200525957>.

³⁰² Eric Volmers, "Return of *Filumena* Highlights Calgary Opera's 2016-2017 Season," *Calgary Herald*, 21 March 2016, accessed 22 May 2016, <http://calgaryherald.com/entertainment/theatre/return-of-filumena-highlight-calgary-operas-2016-2017-season>. The following performance history and award information has been gathered from Estacio, "Filumena Program Notes."

Awards) Special Jury Award, and four 2003 Betty Mitchell Awards for Outstanding New Play (John Murrell), Outstanding Musical Direction (Bramwell Tovey), Outstanding Performance in a Musical (Laura Whalen), and Outstanding Production of a Musical (Calgary Opera).

Estacio and Murrell, or “The Johns” as their colleagues refer to them, both share an intrinsic artistic bond in which “something innate in the work of each resonates with the other.”³⁰³ They both love opera for its “subtlety and passion that only the fusion of words and music can portray.”³⁰⁴ Their creative personalities complement one another as Calgary Opera’s general director, Bob McPhee points out, Estacio’s music is “very dramatic. Theatricality is innate in him. [...] his work needs to be visualized,” whereas Murrell has a lyricism in his writing and “wants his scripts to sing.”³⁰⁵ After their success with *Filumena*, “The Johns” continued their harmonious partnership, creating two additional operas: *Frobisher* (Calgary Opera, 2007) and *Lillian Alling* (Vancouver Opera, 2010).³⁰⁶

According to Estacio, “serendipity” brought Murrell and him together as both of them had recently accepted new positions in close proximity of each other. Estacio had taken the post of Composer-in-Residence for Calgary Opera and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra; meanwhile, Murrell had just become The Banff Centre’s Executive Artistic Director of Performing Arts.³⁰⁷ With his new position, Estacio had the goal of writing a one-act opera and was on the lookout for a librettist. Murrell, on the other hand, had longed to write an

³⁰³ Tim Christison, “Kindred Spirits,” *Opera Canada* 48, no. 1 (Jan, 2007): 28, accessed 22 May 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/220298938?accountid=1465>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 26-28.

³⁰⁶ Refer to Chapter 5 for discussion on *Lillian Alling*. “The Librettist – John Murrell,” *Filumena* Website, 2006, accessed 23 May 2016, <http://filumena.johnestacio.com/librettist.asp>.

³⁰⁷ *The Making of Filumena*, produced by Jean Patenaude and Patio Olson, directed for TV by Eric Till (Edmonton: Filu Productions, The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and CBC Television, 2007), DVD.

opera for which he had been sitting on a perfect story for almost a decade.³⁰⁸ As Estacio humoredly puts it, “I was a composer in search of a librettist, and he was a librettist looking for a composer ... you know, we were both single and available. So we met, and hit it off.”³⁰⁹ Due to enthusiastic support from Calgary Opera and The Banff Centre, what Estacio and Murrell had originally thought would be a one-act operetta in about five years time quickly turned into a full-scale grand opera in less than two years.³¹⁰

Murrell’s story about Filumena, the only woman hung in Alberta, blends together Canada’s history in an operatic fashion with what Estacio refers to as a “combination of tragedy, murder, unrequited love and larger-than-life emotions.”³¹¹ Estacio, whose parents emigrated from Portugal, wanted to tell “a true Canadian story, [...] about new Canadians in Canada.”³¹² Therefore, *Filumena* depicts the lives of an immigrant community trying to establish themselves in a new land, “build[ing] new lives and aspirations for themselves and for their children.”³¹³

³⁰⁸ Anne Nothof, “*Filumena*,” Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia, last modified 1 April 2009, accessed 23 May 2016, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Filumena>.

³⁰⁹ Mark Hopkins, “Interview with John Estacio,” *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association* 12, no. 2 (Spring, 2014): 5, accessed 23 May 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1534481694?accountid=14656>.

³¹⁰ Christison, “Kindred Spirits,” 26.

³¹¹ Carmen Wittmeier, “The Hangman and the High C,” *The Report Newsmagazine*, 28 (9 July 2001): 54, accessed 23 May 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/202952024?accountid=14656>.

³¹² *Vueweekly*, “Worst Hangover Ever,” 24 November 2005, accessed 23 May 2016, http://www.vueweekly.com/worst_hangover_ever.

³¹³ *The Edmonton Journal*, “Filumena Comes Home: Tale of Last Woman Hanged in Alberta has all the Ingredients of a Rip-Roaring Opera,” 25 November 2005, accessed 23 May 2016, <http://www.canada.com/story.html?id=6e13ce23-5981-4a54-aaf1-8284317098b8>.

4.1.1 Librettist: John Murrell

John Murrell (b. 1945), originally from Texas and now settled in Calgary, is a prominent playwright, director, actor, and educator.³¹⁴ He has achieved international renown for his works, becoming one of Canada's most frequently produced playwrights. His plays have been translated into fifteen languages and performed in over thirty countries. He has also gained an international reputation for his English translations of plays and has written several works for ballet, including Ballet British Columbia's *Orpheus* (2002) and The National Ballet of Canada's *Tristan and Isolde* (2003).

Murrell has dedicated his life to the arts, serving as a mentor, consultant, and arts advocate in his roles as Playwright-in-Residence with Theatre Calgary (1978-1980), Associate Director of the Stratford Festival of Canada (1986-89), Head of the Banff Playwrights Colony (1986-89), Head of the Theatre Section of the Canada Council for the Arts (1988-1992), and Artistic Director/Executive Producer of the Canada Council for the Arts (1999-2007). In addition to the numerous awards he has won for his plays, Murrell has also received many prestigious honours in recognition of his great contribution to the performing arts, including Officer of the Order of Canada (2003), The Alberta Order of Excellence (2002), The Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts (2002), The Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement (2008), and an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Calgary (2006).

While travelling through Crowsnest Pass, Alberta, Murrell picked up a booklet entitled *The Rum Runners* that held various stories about the area's bootlegging trade. In

³¹⁴ The following biographical information has been gathered from: "The Librettist – John Murrell," *Filumena* Website; and Donna Coates, "John Murrell," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified 4 March 2015, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/john-murrell>.

particular, the story of Emilio Picariello or “Emperor Pic,” the rumrunners’ kingpin, caught Murrell’s interest. After trying several times to turn the story into a play, Murrell knew that only opera could do it justice because, as he eloquently puts it: “Music alone or words alone cannot impart the infinite subtlety of the human mind, in the very same instant when our hearts are expanding to contain eternal passions.”³¹⁵

Murrell’s efficient yet powerful writing style suits opera, as Estacio remarks, “It always strikes me as astonishing how much meaning and how many layers John [Murrell] can infuse into his words and be so economical about it.”³¹⁶ In *Filumena*, Murrell blends English and Italian together to depict the story of an Italian immigrant community adjusting to their new lives in Canada. As DeLong comments: “The use of a mixed text of Italian and English work[s] marvellously, the nuances of each language admirably portraying the differing and often contradictory emotional spaces in which the characters find themselves.”³¹⁷

While inspired by true historical people and events, Murrell did imagine some details of the libretto to enhance the drama, such as Filumena’s affair with Steve Picariello.³¹⁸ With *Filumena*, Murrell strove to express the true emotions of his characters and portray the inner thoughts that the real-life Filumena could never say aloud. As Murrell states, “It is my aim as the librettist to embody the characters. I wanted to dig deeper than

³¹⁵ “The Librettist – John Murrell,” *Filumena* Website.

³¹⁶ Christison, “Kindred Spirits,” 28.

³¹⁷ Kenneth DeLong, “*Filumena* Debuts Fully Formed,” *National Post*, 3 February 2003, accessed 29 May 2016, https://www.musiccentre.ca/sites/www.musiccentre.ca/files/resources/pdfmedia/58108_filumena1_11101_estacio_press.pdf.

³¹⁸ Refer to Section 4.3.4 for more historical background on the life of Filumena Lassandro.

just the facts and the public utterances. I wanted to go beyond history and into the realm of opera.”³¹⁹

4.1.2 Composer: John Estacio

With his first opera, *Filumena*, John Estacio (b. 1966), from Newmarket, Ontario, won over audiences and critics alike with reviews such as: “If ever a contemporary opera deserved a shelf life, *Filumena* is the one” (Paula Citron, *The Globe and Mail*)³²⁰ and “Mimi and Madame Butterfly move over; there’s a new heroine on the block and her name is *Filumena*” (Bob Clark, *Calgary Herald*).³²¹ Estacio has since established himself as a prominent opera composer having composed three additional operas: *Frobisher* (2007), *Lillian Alling* (2010), and *Ours* (Opera on the Avalon, 2016).

Estacio has served as Composer-in-Residence for the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (1992-2000), Pro Coro Canada, and for both The Calgary Philharmonic and Calgary Opera (2000-2003).³²² He has written for a wide variety of genres including orchestral music, ballet scores, song cycles, film scores, choral music, chamber ensembles, and theatre. He also has a CD of orchestral music, entitled *Frenergy: The Music of John Estacio* (CBC Records 2004). Estacio has received four JUNO nominations and won numerous awards for his music including the National Arts Council Award for Composers, AMPIA Award, and SOCAN Concert Music Awards. His orchestral works have been

³¹⁹ Patricia Robertson, “Show Time,” *Avenue Magazine*, January 2003, accessed 29 May 2016, http://www.centremusique.ca/sites/www.musiccentre.ca/files/resources/pdfmedia/58108_filumena6_11101_estacio_press.pdf.

³²⁰ Paula Citron, “A Triumphant *Filumena*,” *The Globe and Mail*, 30 April 2005, accessed 30 May 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/a-triumphant-filumena/article18222110>.

³²¹ Quoted in Estacio, “*Filumena* Program Notes.”

³²² The following biographical information has been gathered from: John Estacio, “Biography,” [JohnEstacio.com](http://www.johnestacio.com/biography_long.asp), accessed 24 May 2016, http://www.johnestacio.com/biography_long.asp; and “The Composer – John Estacio,” *Filumena* Website, 2006, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://filumena.johnestacio.com/composer.asp>.

performed by most of Canada's major orchestras as well as internationally by ensembles such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, and the National Youth Orchestra of the Americas.

With *Filumena*, Estacio and Murrell strove to create an opera that would appeal to a wide audience, or as Murrell puts it, "an opera which is accessible to everyone from the fanatical opera aficionado to the first-time opera-goer."³²³ Estacio tackled this challenge by incorporating tuneful melodies throughout the opera and creating what Richard Todd from *The Ottawa Citizen* describes as, "Glorious, hummable, singable melodies woven into a sophisticated tapestry of music drama."³²⁴ Of all the characters, Filumena's music has the most memorable and songful melodies, which permeate throughout the opera and symbolize her hopes and dreams.³²⁵ In addition, Estacio enhances the work's melodic lyricism by setting much of the opera's dialogue in an arioso style rather than in recitative.³²⁶

Estacio places great importance on the words, their meanings, and the way in which singers produce and sing them; "liv[ing] in and among the syllables - not just inside the words, but inside the breakdown of the words."³²⁷ His careful attention to textual setting and the way in which the melodic lines lie within the voice has led singers to praise his vocal writing. Laura Whalen, who premiered the role of Filumena proclaims, "Estacio's music is much more singable than anything I've ever done from other contemporary works.

³²³ "The Librettist – John Murrell," *Filumena* Website.

³²⁴ Estacio, "Filumena Program Notes."

³²⁵ For further discussion on Filumena's thematic material, refer to Section 4.5.2.

³²⁶ DeLong, "Filumena Debuts Fully Formed." For examples of arioso passages, refer to John Estacio and John Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 2007), 14-16 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 147-172) and 66-71 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 24-57).

³²⁷ Christison, "Kindred Spirits," 28.

[...] It is also the most satisfying singing from any work I've ever done. He has a real natural instinct – a genius. He is definitely a master composer.”³²⁸

In writing an opera “about Canadians – by Canadians – for Canadians,” Estacio incorporates a mélange of music from the characters’ various heritages.³²⁹ This, as DeLong points out, allows Estacio’s music to “effortlessly underline[...] the complex social mix of the various characters.”³³⁰ For example, Estacio includes Italian popular tunes such as Steve’s aria, “Menzà na strada,” and Scottish hymns played by bagpipes at Constable Lawson’s funeral.³³¹

4.2 List of Lead Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from Calgary Opera’s premiere performance of *Filumena* on 1 February 2003.³³²

Filumena/Florence Lassandro (Soprano)	Laura Whalen
Emilio Picariello (Baritone)	Gaétan Laperrière
Steve Picariello (Tenor)	David Pomeroy
Charlie Lassandro (Baritone)	Gregory Dahl
Maria Picariello (Mezzo-soprano)	Elizabeth Turnbull
McAlpine (Tenor)	Torin Chiles
Constable Lawson (Tenor/High Baritone)	Krzysztof Biernacki
Mamma Costanzo (Mezzo-soprano)	Jacqui Lynn Fidler

³²⁸ *Vueweekly*, “Worst Hangover Ever.”

³²⁹ *Filumena*, Banff Summer Arts Festival Information Booklet, 2001, 10, quoted in Colleen Lydia Renihan, “Sounding the Past: Canadian Opera as Historical Narrative” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 66, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/31915>.

³³⁰ DeLong, “*Filumena* Debuts Fully Formed.”

³³¹ Refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 48-50 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 523-544, “Menzà na strada”), and 236-237 (Act 2, Scene 7: mm. 1-12, bagpipe melody).

³³² *Ibid.*, vii (Original Cast).

Papà Costanzo (Baritone)

Graham Paynter

Conductor: Bramwell Tovey

Director: Kelly Robinson

4.3 Historical Background

4.3.1 Prohibition in Canada

Prohibition began in Alberta on 21 July 1914 and by 1 July 1916 all of Canada had banned the consumption of alcohol in accordance with the Temperance Act.³³³ This social movement gained momentum during WWI with clever propaganda, using combative slogans to encourage people at home to make sacrifices like those fighting in the war – especially since the grain used for manufacturing liquor could feed soldiers.

However, soldiers returning home after the war had no patience for prohibition and the movement quickly lost favour. Because the act passed solely as a wartime order-in-council, it no longer applied after the war when the government revoked the Wartime Measures Act. Instead, a more lenient Canada Temperance Act came about in 1919 and gradually provinces began to allow the sale of liquor through their provincial governments. On 10 May 1924, Canada's prohibition came to an end.

Despite prohibition, the Crowsnest Pass region of Alberta voted to remain "wet." When British Columbia legalized alcohol again in 1919, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba remained "dry." This allowed bootleggers in Crowsnest Pass to thrive by illegally smuggling in liquor from British Columbia and the United States. Alberta's government

³³³ Information for the following Canadian prohibition history has been gathered from: Gerald Hallowell, "Prohibition," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, revised by Richard Foot, 12 August 2013, last modified 4 March 2015, accessed 31 May 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/prohibition>; and "Historical Background to the Story of *Filumena*," *Filumena Website*, 2006, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://filumena.johnestacio.com/background.asp>.

created a special police force, The Alberta Provincial Police (APP), to deal specifically with bootleggers and enforce prohibition regulations.

4.3.2 Italian Diaspora (1870-1919)

The Italian Diaspora refers to the large-scale emigration of Italians during the period after the Italian Unification (c. 1815-1871) to the rise of Fascism in the 1920's.³³⁴ This unification or *Risorgimento* consolidated all the states on the Italian peninsula under the Kingdom of Italy. Unfortunately, this unification did not improve the quality of life for many farmers in southern Italy, who suffered from poverty, overpopulation, and poor health and educational conditions. Therefore, with a push from the Italian government who could no longer handle the surplus population, over sixteen million Italians emigrated to the Americas before WWI – with almost 120,000 people arriving in Canada.

Emigration halted temporarily during WW1 and during the years between the wars (1919-1939) due to restrictive immigrations laws. However, by 1985, over twenty-nine million Italians had emigrated. Sixty-five percent of these people settled permanently abroad. Most of the immigrants who arrived in Canada before WW1 found work as unskilled, hard-labourers and settled in coal mining areas such as Blairmore and Coleman, Alberta.

³³⁴ Information for the following history of the Italian diaspora in Canada has been gathered from: Franc Sturino, "Italian Canadians," The Canadian Encyclopedia, last modified 4 March 2015, accessed 31 May 16, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/italian-canadians>; and "Historical Background to the Story of *Filumena*," *Filumena* Website.

4.3.3 Capital Punishment in Canada

From 1869-1960, Canada only had three crimes punishable by the death penalty: murder, rape, and treason.³³⁵ In 1961, the government classified murder into capital and non-capital offences. Capital offenders only received the death penalty if their crime involved a planned or deliberate murder, a murder occurring while committing other violent crimes, or the murder of a police officer or prison guard.

Hanging has been Canada's only method of execution and in 1962, Arthur Lucas and Robert Turpin became the last men to swing from the gallows. In 1998, Canada abolished capital punishment. Since 2011, inmates convicted of capital crimes must serve a minimum of twenty-five years in prison before applying for parole.

Canada has had a total of 710 executions. Of these, fifty women received death sentences but only eleven were executed. Filumena Lassandro remains the only woman ever executed in Alberta.

4.3.4 The Life of Filumena Lassandro

The opera follows the life of Filumena Lassandro (c. 1901-1923), a young immigrant from Italy who settled with her family in the Crowsnest Pass region of Alberta.³³⁶

Historically, it is unclear exactly what kind of relationship Filumena had with the Picariello men; however, there is evidence that she frequently joined them on their booze smuggling trips. Some speculate that she was either romantically involved with Emilio Picariello or his

³³⁵ Information for the following history on capital punishment in Canada has been gathered from: "Historical Background to the Story of *Filumena*," *Filumena Website*; and Paul Gendreau and Wayne Renke, "Capital Punishment," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, revised by Jon Tattrie, 6 February 2006, last modified 15 January 2016, accessed 31 May 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/capital-punishment>.

³³⁶ The following biographical information on Filumena Lassandro has been gathered from Aritha Van Herk, "Driving to Death," in *Great Dames*, ed. Janie Dickin and Cameron Elspeth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 56.

son, Stephano.³³⁷ It is interesting to note that at the time of her arrest, Filumena was not living with her husband, Charlie Lassandro. Instead, her clothes were found in the children's room of the Picariello household.³³⁸

On 21 September 1922, Filumena and Emilio Picariello were involved in a shootout that led to the death of the unarmed, Constable Steve Lawson.³³⁹ (Note: to stay consistent with the opera libretto, the following text refers to Emilio Picariello as "Picariello," and Stephano Picariello as "Steve.") The two were put on trial and Picariello's lawyer tried to frame Filumena, wagering that she would likely escape the death penalty due to the precedence that no woman had ever been hung in Alberta.³⁴⁰ Instead, the judge sentenced both Filumena and Picariello to death and they were executed on 2 May 1923.

Because neither Filumena nor Picariello testified and due to the lack of forensic technology and the abundance of contradictory evidence, Murrell suggests that had the trial taken place today, "either a mistrial would [have been] declared or they would [have been] given lesser sentences."³⁴¹ Judgment probably swayed against Filumena due to her status as an immigrant from a lower societal class and because her case involved the death of an officer.³⁴² However, regret over her death and fear of further violence associated with the rum running business most likely expedited the end of prohibition in Alberta.³⁴³

³³⁷ Van Herk, "Driving to Death."

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁴⁰ Peter Edwards and Michel Auger, *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Organized Crime: From Captain Kidd to Mom Boucher* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 127.

³⁴¹ Brian Bergman, "Calgary Opera's *Filumena*," *Maclean's Magazine*, published on The Canadian Encyclopedia, 17 March 2003, last modified 15 December 2013, accessed 29 May 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/calgary-operas-filumena>.

³⁴² Wittmeier, "The Hangman and the High C."

³⁴³ Edwards and Auger, *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Organized Crime*, 128.

4.4 Opera Synopsis

Act 1, Scene 1: In the Autumn of 1915, friends and family celebrate Filumena Costanzo and Charlie Lassandro's wedding in Crowsnest Pass.³⁴⁴ The guests enjoy themselves but Mamma notices her daughter's unhappiness and tries to comfort her, speaking in Italian. Filumena reminds Mamma to use only English because Charlie has forbidden them to speak Italian. Mamma dislikes this and becomes even more upset when Papà calls Filumena by her English name, "Florence" – again because Charlie demands it. Charlie then scolds Filumena for embarrassing him by behaving so sombre at her own wedding.

The charismatic Emilio Picariello, Charlie's boss and the rumrunner's kingpin, toasts to the couple's happiness and arranges the band to play for their first dance. McAlpine, one of Picariello's bootlegging cronies makes a drunken scene by calling Picariello the "biggest hearted bootlegger that ever breathed."³⁴⁵ While McAlpine gets dragged out, Picariello appeases the crowd by making his son, Steve, sing a song in honour of the newlyweds. Steve entrances Filumena with his aria, "Menzà na strada," "a song from [the] old country about roses, love, and pride."³⁴⁶

The appearance of Picariello's nemesis, Constable Lawson of the Alberta Provincial Police interrupts Steve's song. Jealous after seeing how Filumena had looked at Steve, Charlie scolds her. Filumena distances herself from the crowd and notices a storm brewing

³⁴⁴ The following synopsis has been summarized from: Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score; and Estacio, "Filumena Program Notes."

³⁴⁵ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 44-45 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 492-494).

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 47 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 516-517). Based on Renihan's translation of the song's poetry, "Menzà na strada" means, "As I was walking down the road." For the full translation of this song, refer to Renihan, "Sounding the Past," 72.

in the distance. She sadly reflects on her situation, dreaming of a different life – “a life the size of storms.”³⁴⁷

Act 1, Scene 2: In winter several years later, Picariello, Charlie, McAlpine and the other cronies discuss their bootlegging business in the lobby of Picariello’s Alberta Hotel in Blairmore. Filumena walks in on them while doing her chores and the men suddenly stop their conversation, feeling wary of how she regards their illicit trade. Charlie quickly yells at her to get out of their way but Picariello reprimands him for treating her so roughly. Picariello then gently takes Filumena aside to talk and she reveals how much she dislikes his bootlegging business. She tires of having the police dropping by to snoop around and of Charlie treating the business more like his wife than herself. Picariello consoles her by saying that they share the same dream and promises her that as soon as they make enough money to earn themselves respect, they will all quit rum running and start new, clean lives.

In order for her to better understand their efforts, Picariello suggests that Filumena join Steve, once he returns from school, on bootlegging trips across the border. Together, the two could pose as a young couple going out on a drive so that the police would not suspect them of transporting illegal booze. The thought of seeing Steve again and spending time with him brightens Filumena’s outlook. Meanwhile, in the hidden cellar beneath the hotel, several vehicles arrive carrying contraband liquor.

Constable Lawson arrives at the hotel and Charlie tries to keep him occupied while everyone else frantically hides all the bootlegging paraphernalia. Lawson finally makes his way past Charlie and searches the place. A fight almost breaks out between Picariello and Lawson but Filumena quickly intervenes. When Lawson leaves, she returns to her chores

³⁴⁷ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 59 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 649-651).

and hums “Menzà na strada” to herself. When Charlie hears this, he immediately stops talking and stares coldly at her.

Act 1, Scene 3: The following year in early summer, Filumena and Steve go on a bootlegging trip and picnic in an alpine meadow outside Sparwood, British Columbia – a town near Alberta’s border. While they wait for Picariello and Charlie to arrive with the liquor, they play an Italian-English translation game. Filumena wins and as her prize, she asks Steve to sing the rest of “Menzà na strada” that he did not get to sing at her wedding. As he sings, Steve draws nearer to Filumena and the two passionately kiss.

Picariello and Charlie arrive with the liquor and transfer it into the hidden compartments of Steve’s “Whiskey Six.”³⁴⁸ Noticing Filumena’s great happiness, Picariello takes her aside to talk and she tells him how promising this land now seems and how she dreams of hope for the future. After all the liquor has been loaded, Picariello sends Filumena and Steve back across the border under the pretence of a young couple in love. He delights in how effective their disguise has proven. Meanwhile Charlie’s suspicions and jealousy grow.

Act 1, Scene 4: Later that summer on the streets outside the hotel, Picariello and his comrades campaign “The Emperor’s Pic’s” election to Blairmore Town Council. Picariello hopes that by winning this election, his family and friends can stop bootlegging and live their dreams of a clean life. Meanwhile, in the kitchen, Charlie confronts Filumena and Steve as he has finally come to the realization that their relationship is more than just a disguise for bootlegging.

³⁴⁸ A “Whiskey Six” refers to Buick’s “McLaughlin Six Specials,” which could outrun the police. Picariello had adapted them with secret compartments to smuggle contraband liquor into Alberta. For more information refer to John Kinnear, “Days of the Rumrunners,” Fernie.com, accessed 2 June 2016, <http://fernie.com/about-fernie/history/days-of-the-rumrunners>.

In the hotel lobby, Picariello makes a speech to his followers but Charlie angrily interrupts him. He wants life to continue as it has and does not share in Picariello's dreams. Maria, Picariello's wife, has also just realized that her son is romantically involved with Filumena and argues with Picariello. He tries to appease her anger by saying that Filumena simply shares their dream and that he plans to pay for her schooling once they leave the rum running business. He and Maria then re-join the campaigning crowds. Meanwhile, Lawson slips into the hotel for a secret meeting with Charlie.

Act 2, Scene 1: On 21 September 1922 in the hotel's kitchen, Filumena worriedly waits for Steve to come home and looks out at the storm brewing in the distance. When Filumena asks Charlie where Steve has gone, he maliciously replies that Steve went with McAlpine on what they were told would be the last smuggling run. Sensing that something has gone wrong, Filumena tells Charlie to go fetch Picariello from the town council meeting. Maria comes in and asks Filumena about Steve. She demands Filumena leave Steve alone and calls her a fool for believing that Picariello would ever stop bootlegging as "it's the only life he knows."³⁴⁹ When Picariello arrives, they suddenly hear a knock from the cellar and McAlpine appears. He tells them how he had escaped to find help as the bootleggers had driven into a trap. Lawson had known they were coming and had been waiting for them at the border. (Probably as a result of Charlie's secret meeting with Lawson.) Lawson then chased them into British Columbia, shooting and badly wounding Steve. Hearing this, Picariello furiously swears to make Lawson pay if he has killed his son. He grabs Filumena and together, they drive off to Lawson's cabin.

³⁴⁹ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 213 (Act 2, Scene 5: mm. 146-148).

Act 2, Scene 2: About a half hour later, after speeding through the horrible storm, Picariello and Filumena arrive at Lawson's cabin on the outskirts of Coleman, Alberta. Picariello yells at Lawson to come outside and forces Filumena to take one of his guns. Lawson opens the door with his wife and children hiding behind him. Blind with fury, Picariello waves his gun and accuses Lawson of killing his son. They break out into a fight as Lawson tries to disarm Picariello. In an attempt to stop their fight, Filumena shoots her gun into the air and startles them. They break apart and as Lawson heads back into the house, Picariello raises his gun to shoot Lawson in the back. Filumena desperately tries to force his gun down but it goes off and Lawson falls dead to the ground.

Interlude: Filumena and Picariello drive off frantically into storm with police officers pursuing them.

Act 2, Scene 7: At Lawson's funeral procession in Fort Macleod, Alberta, the Alberta Provincial Police officers bear Lawson's coffin out, followed by his widow and children. The townspeople comment on the news of his death, reflecting a prejudicial divide in the community. The Anglophone Canadians side with Lawson's family, calling the Italians uncivilized and barbaric, whereas the Italian immigrants side with Picariello, their leader. Filumena's lawyer comments to the press, saying: "even if my client is found guilty, the Canadian people will not suffer a woman to be hanged."³⁵⁰ Picariello turns against Filumena and tells the press that she had asked for the gun and that she was the one who had shot Lawson. Meanwhile, the crowd starts to think that Picariello and Filumena were lovers.

³⁵⁰ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 251-252 (Act 2, Scene 7: 135-138).

Act 2, Scene 8: In November 1922, a week before the trial, Maria and Steve visit Filumena at a jail in Calgary. Maria angrily lashes out at Filumena for having ruined their lives. Steve begs Filumena to take the blame for Lawson's death and save his father, reasoning that the jury would never hang a woman. With great pain, Filumena realizes that Steve had never really loved her as much as she loved him. She tells him that she will consider his request and forces him to leave.

Act 2, Scene 9: On 1 May 1923, in their death row cells at the Fort Saskatchewan Penitentiary, Picariello and Filumena reflect on their trial. It had lasted only four hours for neither had testified; it seemed pointless to do so when they both would have told different stories.³⁵¹ While Filumena feels guilt for Lawson's unnecessary death and wishes everyone to move on and forget her, Picariello feels only regret and anger over his lost dreams. The prison guards then escort Picariello to the gallows. Lightening appears outside and Filumena recalls her love of storms. She casts away all her regrets and accepts her fate: "Come, death, and set me free!"³⁵²

4.5 "The Storm Aria"

4.5.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role calls for either a full lyric soprano with a good extension at the top or a lyric coloratura with a more lyric quality given that Filumena must sing numerous "high C's" in many of the ensembles.³⁵³ Because Filumena is onstage for the entire opera,

³⁵¹ In Act 2, Scene 9, Filumena explains why neither she nor Picariello testified: "You had your truth, Emilio, and I had mine. But they were not the same, so we could not tell them." Refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 287-288 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 10-17).

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 305-306 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 226-228).

³⁵³ The following ensembles require a strong upper register: Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 252-255 (Act 2, Scene 7: mm. 146-163) and 262-275 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 1-99, Trio).

singers must possess “strong technical skills,” great stamina and endurance, as well as a “youthful exuberance.”³⁵⁴

Range: C#4-C#6

Character: Not much is known about the real Filumena, but from Murrell’s extensive research interviewing her surviving family, Estacio and Murrell believe she emigrated from Italy as a child.³⁵⁵ They also believe Charlie to be in his thirties, much older than Filumena who would have been around fifteen years old when they married.³⁵⁶ The two share no romantic inclination towards the other as evident from Charlie’s disregard for Filumena and her distance towards him. Rather, their marriage was most likely the result of convenience and practicality as Charlie would have needed a wife and Filumena’s parents would have regarded him as able to provide for their daughter.³⁵⁷

To Filumena, marrying Charlie meant leaving the safety of her close-knit, traditional Catholic family and moving to a new town with her “strange new husband” – a man also conspicuously associated with the bootlegging trade.³⁵⁸ Charlie had already begun asserting control and dominance over Filumena at their wedding, renaming her “Florence” and forbidding her to speak in her native tongue.³⁵⁹

As a woman during this era, Filumena would have had very little power or voice. Laura Whalen who premiered the role of Filumena describes how challenging she found playing a female in the 1920’s: “I wanted to show anger and wanted to feel anger in many

³⁵⁴ Bergman, “Calgary Opera’s *Filumena*.”

³⁵⁵ John Estacio, Interview with author, 14 September 2016.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 52 (Act 1, Scene 1: m. 567).

³⁵⁹ Filumena says to her mother: “Speak only English [...] Because my husband wants it so” in Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 9 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 81-90).

of the scenes in the show and it wouldn't have been accepted [...] for Filumena to express that kind of emotion [...] [She] would have had to find some other way to express that."³⁶⁰

Despite all the constraints and burdens placed upon her, as the opera progresses, Filumena gains confidence and independence, slowly revealing the great strength she has within her.³⁶¹ Even in the first scene, she starts to psychologically retaliate against Charlie by promising her mother that regardless of her new life and Charlie's demands, she will stay true to herself and not turn into "Florence": "Inside my heart, I will keep my own name [...] to stay Filumena."³⁶² As Whalen describes, "When things happen to [Filumena], she tries to find out why and tries to figure out where things fit in the world, where she fits in the world and what it all means."³⁶³ Rather than simply taking things as they are, Filumena questions her situation and tries to find a way to escape her confines. She dreams of a greater future and perhaps this explains why she feels so drawn to storms and their immense power. Throughout the opera, she fights for her dreams by standing up to Charlie, studying to go to school, and helping Picariello to achieve their aspirations. Murrell describes Filumena as "a dreamer, capable of enchantment and also of enchanting, a person capable of extraordinary happiness, someone who dreams of improving her lot in life."³⁶⁴

Setting: (Act 1, Scene 1) In a park in Crowsnest Pass, friends and family celebrate Filumena and Charlie's wedding. Entranced by Steve's performance of "Menzà na strada," "Filumena gazes steadfastly at Steve."³⁶⁵ Charlie becomes jealous when he notices her attraction to Steve. He pulls her aside and says:

³⁶⁰ Patenaude and Olson, *The Making of Filumena*.

³⁶¹ Refer to Section 4.6.1 for more information on Filumena's character development.

³⁶² Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 17-18 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 192-205).

³⁶³ Patenaude and Olson, *The Making of Filumena*.

³⁶⁴ Nothof, "Filumena."

³⁶⁵ Refer to the stage directions in Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 49 (Act 1, Scene 1).

Che cos' hai?
Mi fai vergogna!
Did you like that little song?
Everyone could see that you did.
What right has he got to sing to you like that,
Picariello's goddamn kid?!"³⁶⁶

After his scolding, "Filumena looks all around, nervous and isolated."³⁶⁷ Feeling overwhelmed by the festive atmosphere, Charlie's anger, and her encounter with Steve, she moves away from the crowd to reflect on her flurry of emotions.

In the distance she sees a storm brewing, it excites her and gives her the strength to begin her new life. As Estacio explains, the storm "underlines her connection to her surroundings, [...] we imagine that she was quite drawn to this little corner of the world and everything about it."³⁶⁸ In addition, the storm serves as a metaphor for this crossroad in Filumena's life and for the whirlwind of things that have just happened and will soon happen to her.³⁶⁹ Not only has she just married Charlie, but Steve and Picariello with their alluring personalities have also entered into her life. Estacio summarizes the storms' symbolism in this scene:

When storms come along, they change things – they make things cleaner, they knock things over, they move things around [so] along comes a storm and everything is going to change around her. It's a metaphor in many ways for what has happened to her [...] and what's going to happen to her over the course of the opera.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 51-52 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 552-557). "Che cos' hai? Mi fai vergogna!" translates into "What was that? You shame me!"

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 52 (stage directions).

³⁶⁸ Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

Aria 3 "The Storm Aria"³⁷¹

Music: John Estacio
Libretto: John Murrell

Filumena looks all around, nervous and isolated.

♩ = 69

4

6 *quasi recit.* **Più mosso** (♩ = 88)

Che c'è in ques-ta fol-la per me? So man-y peo ple,

© 2003 John Estacio & John Murrell

³⁷¹ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 52-60 (Act 1, Scene 1).

9

so much noise, — My strange new hus-band laugh - ing with the boys,

tr(^b)

12 **Ritenu**to

Pi - ca - riel - lo with his big dreams and big voice. My moth - er so sad in her

tr(^b)

ppp

15 ♩ = 72

on - ly nice clothes. And a boy who sings to me,

tr(^b)

8^{va}

19

"You are like a rose."

*A brief shimmer of lightning, followed by muffled thunder beyond the clouds.
Wedding guests scarcely notice this, but Filumena gazes upward, smiling.*

Poco piu mosso **Moderato** ♩ = 56

22 *molto rit.* *8va*

f *p* *pppp*

(Lightning and thunder)

26 *(She grows more and more joyfully isolated during the aria which follows)*

There will be a storm to - night, I love a storm.

30

When there is no-where safe in sight, and no-where

33

warm. Yes, I could run to some-where safe when dark clouds swarm, but

36

Più mosso ♩ = 92

I love, I love a storm!

40

Musical score for measures 40-41. The vocal line is silent. The piano accompaniment features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment of chords.

42 **Allegro molto** ♩ = 144

Musical score for measures 42-43. The vocal line has lyrics: "The wind does a dance with the grass and the". The piano accompaniment includes a *sostenuto* marking and a triplet in the treble clef.

44

Musical score for measures 44-45. The vocal line has lyrics: "trees! The rain plays a". The piano accompaniment continues with a triplet in the treble clef.

46

drum, and so does the thun - der!

48

The riv - ers es -

50

cape from their walls of stone,

52

and all of the earth is reel - ing with won - der!

55

A - long comes a

57

storm to make eve - ry - thing new,

59

to scat - ter the lies and leave on - ly what's

sub. p

61

true! A - long comes the storm with its ma - gi - cal

mf *sub. p*

64

pow - er, and all of the earth is changed in an hour!

mf *sub. p* *f*

rit. *a tempo*

68

stringendo

72 8^{va}

74 **A tempo**

There will be a storm to -

77 (senza rubato)
mp

night, _____ to

80

wash me clean,

82

f
to shake the earth and make the

8va

sfp

85

heart once

mp

8va

88

more serene.

90

f

I would love to live a

8va *loco* *8va*

mp

93

life the size of storms, Oh, I love, I

(8)

97

love a storm.

ff

p

101

con rubato

A storm to lift the heart.

sfp colla voce

p

105

A storm that's just for me. Come, storm, and let me

sfp

108 *poco strigendo*

fly! Come storm, come storm,

poco strigendo

sfp *sfp*

111 **Vivo**

come storm and set me free!

sfp *ff*

114 *rall.*

rall. *ffz*

4.5.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

The aria follows the form of Introduction (mm. 1-6), Recitative (mm. 6-22), A (mm. 22-38), B (mm. 38-75), A' (mm. 75- 90), A" (mm. 91-103), and Coda (mm. 103-117). (For audition purposes, singers may choose to cut the beginning recitative and begin the aria on beat three of m. 22.)³⁷² In the recitative, Filumena succinctly summarizes how she feels about all the main characters and her current situation. The various emotions that she expresses in such a brief span of music gives singers the opportunity to demonstrate subtlety in their acting and character portrayal. The following discussion will outline significant musical associations to aid singers in their interpretation of this recitative.

The opening piano introduction features a melodic motive (Ex. 25) first heard earlier in the scene when Filumena reassures her mother that she will always remain "Filumena."³⁷³ Estacio places snatches of this motive throughout the opera but its most poignant appearance occurs in Filumena's final aria, "May God Forgive Him."³⁷⁴

At the top of the recitative section (mm. 6-7), Filumena asks herself "Che c'è in questa folla per me?" ("What is there for me in this crowd?"). The following phrases (mm. 8-13) musically depict Filumena's anxiety with a back and forth swaying motion. Her melodic line rocks up and down; the accompanimental chords alternate back and forth; and the dynamics are unsettled with unrelenting *crescendo-decrescendo* dynamic patterns. The constant, dissonant trills in the accompaniment also serve to intensify the tense atmosphere.

³⁷² Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁷³ For an example of the "Filumena Motive," refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 18 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 204-207).

³⁷⁴ Refer to Section 4.6.2.

Within the recitative, Estacio musically depicts Filumena's feelings towards the other characters as she talks about them. For example, her chromatic line in mm. 10-11 emphasizes her dislike of Charlie, her "strange new husband." Estacio portrays Filumena's fascination with Picariello through his emphasis of the word "big" (m. 13), twice placing it on upward leaps. Estacio also portrays Filumena's feeling of tenderness and sadness towards her mother by changing to a *ppp* dynamic, slower *ritenuto* tempo, and a calmer accompaniment sans trills (mm. 14-15). As Filumena's thoughts turn towards Steve, Estacio features a motive in the accompaniment derived from Steve's "Menzà na strada" aria (Ex. 26).³⁷⁵ Filumena's vocal line becomes more lyrical and she paraphrases the song in English, "You are like a rose." Although Steve never uses these exact words in his aria, she extrapolates the song to mean this.³⁷⁶ Perhaps due to her infatuation with him, she imagines the song to mean more than he intended. In Act 1, Scene 2, when she asks Steve about this piece, she refers to it as "my song."³⁷⁷ He hardly understands or recalls the piece and asks, "What song? [...] That old-fashioned song?"³⁷⁸ Therefore, it seems to hold more significance to Filumena than to Steve, and unfortunately in the end, so does their relationship.

In the interlude leading into Section A, quiet tremolos in the accompaniment depict "a brief shimmer of lightning, followed by muffled thunder beyond the clouds" (Ex. 27).³⁷⁹ Instead of being afraid of the storm, the stage notes describe how "Filumena gazes upward,

³⁷⁵ For an example of Steve's "Menzà na strada Motive" refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 49 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 528-529).

³⁷⁶ Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁷⁷ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 118 (Act 1, Scene 2: m. 92)

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 118 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 93-97).

³⁷⁹ Refer to stage directions at m. 22 in the author's "The Storm Aria" adaptation.

smiling” in anticipation.³⁸⁰ At m. 25, the change to perfect fourths and fifths in the accompaniment’s chordal harmonies create an open and vast atmosphere (Ex. 27). This contributes to the aria’s sense of psychological freedom. As the aria progresses, Filumena “grows more and more joyfully isolated,” singing alone onstage free from the control of others.³⁸¹

In Section A, the vocal line continues in an arioso style that should stay more or less in tempo. In m. 33, singers may choose to put a breath or lift after the word, “yes,” to highlight it (Ex. 28).³⁸² In m. 37, singers may add a slight *ritardando* on “love” and use “a storm” to set up the accompaniment in the following *più mosso* section (Ex. 28).

In the interlude (mm. 38-42) leading into Section B, the accompaniment depicts the winds rising around Filumena. Pianists should gradually *accelerando* to establish the new *allegro molto* tempo by m. 42, being careful to not rush past the suggested metronome marking. Renihan describes how in this section, “Musically, the energy throughout the entire orchestra is palpable, and the harp glissandi express a sense of [Filumena’s] excitement at the prospect of experiencing the drama of a storm.”³⁸³ As Filumena describes the storm, Estacio’s accompaniment aurally portrays the swirling of the wind with rapid ascending and descending figures (Ex. 29) and the claps of thunder with loud crashing chords (Ex. 30). As he puts it, “since we can’t have real rain on the stage, the orchestra has to suggest it.”³⁸⁴ In addition, Estacio integrates a variation of the aria’s main theme in the accompaniment that occurs as the “Storm Motive” (Ex. 31) throughout the aria and

³⁸⁰ Refer to stage directions at m. 22 in the author’s “The Storm Aria” adaptation

³⁸¹ Refer stage directions at m. 26.

³⁸² Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁸³ Renihan, “Sounding the Past,” 67.

³⁸⁴ Estacio, Interview with author.

opera.³⁸⁵ Pianists should highlight the motive as it accentuates the storm's grandiose and triumphant power.

Pianists should carefully follow Estacio's dynamic markings so as not to overpower the voice in the busy and exciting accompaniment of the B section. In addition, singers should adhere to the vocal line's phrasing and carefully pace their dynamics so as not to get stuck singing *fortissimo* for the entire section. Because much of the vocal line lies within the *passaggio*, singers should also make sure to raise the soft palate, modify towards more open vowels to create greater space, and support their sound with their breath to avoid accumulating excess tension. They should also pronounce all "-er" words such as "wonder" and "thunder" with the more open [ə] vowel, rather than the tighter [ɚ]. In addition, singers should concentrate on focusing their sound in the mask to help cut through the thick orchestration. At m. 65, both singers and pianists should observe the *ritardando* and *subito piano* to create a special moment of wonder and awe. The following interlude (mm. 67-75) features the "Storm Motive" and gradually ascends, building up in tempo and dynamics to culminate at the return of the A' section.

In the A' section (mm. 75-90), the winds gust in and out between Filumena's phrases almost as if she herself controls the wind (Ex. 32). The melodic material is very similar to the previous A section, except musically heightened with doubled rhythmic values, transposition up a perfect fifth, and a thicker and more active accompaniment. As in Section B, singers should ensure to raise the soft palate and fully engage their breath support, especially on the long, sustained high notes. The octave leap down and lower range in mm.

³⁸⁵ Refer to Section 4.6.2.

79-81 may feel quite difficult to focus after singing for so long in the upper register. Here singers should concentrate on singing in the mask to focus their tone.

The A" section (mm. 91-103) builds upon the same thematic material as the previous A sections, but for the first time in the aria, the accompaniment doubles Filumena's part. This reinforcement of the vocal line makes this section feel the most powerful and helps to accentuate Filumena's proclamations. Singers should take advantage of this added accompanimental support and let their voices soar. In mm. 98-99, singers should strive for an even vibrato and round tone by supporting their sound with their breath, dropping the jaw, raising the soft palate, and singing tall vowels.

The interlude that follows (mm. 99-103) features the "Storm Motive" and quickly ascends to a climax that suddenly dissipates with a *sfp* marking at m. 103. The first half of the coda section (mm. 103-108), marked *con rubato* and *colla voce*, should be sung freely like a cadenza with careful attention to intonation. Singers may find it helpful to take a breath in m. 107 as shown in Ex. 33. Within mm. 103-108, singers may take time on a few chosen notes but otherwise these phrases should stay relatively in tempo so as not to sound too cautious. As Estacio explains, it should feel like "*con rubato* but with momentum [...] I want it to keep the sense of the storm, the sense of urgency, the wind, propelling forward these emotions, and her beckoning the storm to come."³⁸⁶

The aria's final measures (mm. 109-117) should accelerate as indicated by the *poco strigendo* marking and build up to the final high B5. In order to deliver a well-executed high note, singers must pace themselves throughout the aria and keep their larynxes down so as not to accumulate excess tension. Singers may also find it helpful to take a breath before

³⁸⁶ Estacio, Interview with author.

the final note and to start the word “free” on E4 with “f” [fə] and move up the to B5 on the end of the word, “-ree” [ri] (Ex. 34). They should slightly modify this [i] vowel towards [ɪ] to avoid a tight and spread sound, and make sure to not pull back on the tongue.

Ex. 25 “Filumena Motive,” mm. 1-4.³⁸⁷

Ex. 26 “Menzà na strada Motive,” mm. 15-21.

Ex. 27 Interlude to Section A, mm. 23-24.

³⁸⁷ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “The Storm Aria” adaptation.

Ex. 28 Suggested breath and *ritardando*, mm. 33-38.

(^o) Yes, I could run to some-where safe when dark clouds swarm, but I love, I love a storm! (rit.) **Più mosso** ♩ = 92

pp

Ex. 29 Swirling wind, m. 51.

mf

Ex. 30 Claps of thunder, m. 58.

mf

Ex. 31 "Storm Motive," mm. 54-56.

Musical score for Ex. 31, "Storm Motive," mm. 54-56. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand has a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) at the beginning, which then changes to *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano) for the subsequent measures. The left hand provides a steady bass line. A box highlights a specific chordal texture in the right hand.

Ex. 32 Gust of wind, mm. 75-79.

Musical score for Ex. 32, "Gust of wind," mm. 75-79. The score is in 4/4 time and includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "A tempo". The vocal line has the lyrics "There will be a storm to - night,". The piano accompaniment features a dynamic marking of *sffp* (sforzando fortissimo piano) at the start, followed by *mp* (mezzo-piano), *f* (forte), and *p* (piano). The piano part includes a *8va* (octave) marking and a *7* (seventh) chord symbol.

Ex. 33 Suggested breath, mm. 107-108.

Musical score for Ex. 33, "Suggested breath," mm. 107-108. The score is in 4/4 time and includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "Come, storm, and let me fly!". The piano accompaniment features a dynamic marking of *sfp* (sforzando piano) and includes a *3* (triple) marking. The piano part consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Ex. 34 Suggestions for mm. 111-116.

The musical score for Ex. 34, mm. 111-116, is presented in two systems. The top system is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are "come storm and set me f - reel" with a phonetic transcription "[fə] - [rɪ]" below. The tempo is marked "Vivo" and the dynamics range from "sf" to "ff". The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes, while the left hand has a simpler bass line. The score ends with a "rall." marking.

4.6 “May God Forgive Him”

4.6.1 Aria Description

Range: D#4-C6

Character: Through her relationship with Picariello and Steve, Filumena blossoms into a strong, young woman, gaining self-confidence and independence. Picariello acts as a quasi-Father figure in her life and as Estacio points out, he probably enjoys “having this lovely young woman around who he can talk to, who he understands, and who has a mind that he can mold and shape.”³⁸⁸ Picariello gives her guidance when she feels lost under her husband’s dominance and reprimands Charlie when he treats her badly. (One might presume that given Charlie’s short temperament and his involvement with alcohol, he may have at times gone beyond verbal abuse and physically taken his anger out on her.)³⁸⁹

Although Picariello betrays Filumena in the end, he did have good intentions in

³⁸⁸ Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

wanting to pay for her education and shared her dreams for a better life. As Murrell summarizes, “What Filumena and Picariello shared was a burning desire to rise above their humble origins.”³⁹⁰ Rather than treat her like nobody as Charlie did, Picariello gives her a role in his business and a sense of self worth. He listens to her and she in turns opens up to him. Estacio points out that “in many ways Picariello is kind of liberal in his thinking for the time [...] he’s sort of like a feminist” as he believes that “she can go to school, she can learn, she can change the world.”³⁹¹

Through her relationship with Steve, who is a few years younger than her, Filumena learns to love and finds “hope for a new life in a new land.”³⁹² He gives her the encouragement and support that she needs to pursue her own dreams and the strength to assert herself against Charlie. Steve even says to Charlie, Filumena has “learned much more: to trust her mind.”³⁹³ When Charlie becomes jealous of her independence and educational aspirations, he tries to demean her by calling her “Florence” and saying:

That’s such a stupid waste of time!
No! For a woman, it’s a crime!
You’re not a wife, you’re just a fool.
This is real life, you’re not in school.³⁹⁴

No longer afraid of him and full of self-confidence, Filumena retaliates by saying:

Poor Charlie can’t you see
That I am through with hiding me and fearing you?
Tutto è cambiato, no lo vedi?
The world is changing so get ready.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ Bergman, “Calgary Opera’s *Filumena*,”

³⁹¹ Estacio, Interview with author.

³⁹² Nothof, “*Filumena*.”

³⁹³ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 155 (Act 1, Scene 4: mm. 215-217).

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 144-146 (Act 1, Scene 4: mm. 91-127).

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 146-147 (Act 1, Scene 4: mm. 127-140). “Tutto è cambiato, no lo vedi?” translates to “Everything has changed, don’t you see it?”

Filumena's attempts to gain "psychological and personal freedom, and genuine love, take on a tragic dimension," for not only do the men in her life betray her, but her dreams do so as well.³⁹⁶ In her thirst for adventure to live "a life the size of storms," Filumena gets swept away in a dangerous trade and a risky love triangle.³⁹⁷

Setting: (Act 2, Scene 9) After only a four-hour trial, Picariello and Filumena received the death penalty and await their execution in their cells at the Fort Saskatchewan Penitentiary. In the duet preceding this aria, Picariello and Filumena each reflect upon their own regrets, mistakes, and future. During the aria's introduction, two guards drag Picariello off to his execution while he pleads to God for help: "Dio, Dio."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ DeLong, "Filumena Debuts Fully Formed."

³⁹⁷ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 59 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 649-651).

³⁹⁸ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 299 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 129-131).

Aria 4: "May God Forgive Him"³⁹⁹

Music: John Estacio
Libretto: John Murrell

(The guards take Picariello away as he sings, "Dio, Dio...")

$\text{♩} = 48$

4

lunga

May God for-give him... and me.

7

$\text{♩} = 60$

I thought we shared a dream, but all we shared was our mis

colla voce

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³⁹⁹ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 299-306 (Act 2, Scene 9).

9

take, and now our dy - ing.

pppp

14 **Adagio** ♩ = 56 *p*

An - oth - er hour, — and I will

19 *mf* *mp*

see God's face. I will ask Him, — I will

ppp

24 *mf*

ask Him "What is true? What is

28 *p*

true..." E al-lo-ra, e al-lo - ra...

32 $\text{♩} = 52$

Io sa-rò fe-li-ce, Mam-ma,

Poco più mosso

37

I will learn what it means to be hap-py, in-side my heart,

41

in-side God's heart, I will have my own name.

45 *poco rit.* **Poco più mosso**

And, al-though we will live a - part now, I will be with you for

49

ev - er, in the win - ter in the spring - time, in the snow, in the rain. For -

loco

54

-ev - er Fi - lu - me - na, for - ev - er, for -

58

-ev - er, for - ev - er, for -

62

-ev - - - er!

65

loco

8va

Poco meno mosso

68

rit.

mp

p

8va

71 *p dolce*

There will be a storm to - night...

pppp

75 *f*

I loved a storm!

f

78 *mp*

When there was no-where safe in sight, and no - where

ppp

81 *f* *rit.* *a tempo* *p*

warm! I could have run to some-where safe,

84 *p* *e.* **Molto Sostenuto** ♩ = 72

free from all harm, but I loved, I loved a storm.

p (Bells)

ppp

89 *mp*

A storm to lift the heart,

pp

92

a storm that's just for me, _____ come, storm, and

p *mp*

95

p a piacere

let me fly... _____

(Bells)

pp

OSSIA

98

Ritenuito

p

Come, death, and set me free! _____

Come, death, and set me free! _____

mf *pp* *pp*

102 (Bells) *pp* (Bells)

105 (Bells)

4.6.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

This aria recapitulates music from Act 1, Scene 1 that represent important moments in Filumena's life, such as her duet with her mother and "The Storm Aria." Estacio incorporates these pieces into new contexts as Filumena reflects on her life and comes to peace with her fate.

The aria follows the form of Introduction (mm. 1-4), Recitative (mm. 5-11), A (mm. 11-29), B (mm. 30-68), C (mm. 69-87), and Coda (mm. 87-108). During the Introduction (mm. 1-4), the accompaniment's sharp and militaristic double dotted rhythms depict the guards as they drag Picariello off to his execution. During the recitative, Filumena reflects on her and Picariello's shared dreams and fate. Her opening words, "May God forgive him" echo Maria's final words to her in Act 2, Scene 8: "You destroyed us all! May God forgive you."⁴⁰⁰ Murrell then incorporates these words throughout Picariello and Filumena's duet (Act 2, Scene 9), which precedes the aria and which serves to starkly contrast the two characters' personalities.⁴⁰¹ Filumena expresses remorse for having contributed to Lawson's death and as Estacio describes, "she shoulders more of the blame and tries to understand" what happened.⁴⁰² In contrast, Picariello angrily blames everyone, feeling that "fate has unjustly plucked him away from his lucrative pursuits."⁴⁰³

In the short piano interlude (mm. 12-14), the accompaniment features a wistful melody built on the "Storm Motive" (Ex. 35).⁴⁰⁴ The A section's (mm. 15-29) accompaniment features a stepwise melody set to an off-beat triplet figure, which Estacio

⁴⁰⁰ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 274-275 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 91-99).

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 287-298 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 1-124).

⁴⁰² Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴⁰³ Bergman, "Calgary Opera's *Filumena*."

⁴⁰⁴ Estacio, Interview with author. Refer to the "Storm Motive" in Ex. 31.

describes as a “pulsating heart-beat.”⁴⁰⁵ He first uses this accompaniment in Act 1, Scene 3, after Filumena and Steve kiss and as she describes to Picariello how she now “embrace[s] every moment’s surprise.”⁴⁰⁶ In both scenes, Estacio uses the lack of down-beat in the orchestra to achieve a “slightly untethered” feeling that is “not completely grounded” (Ex. 36).⁴⁰⁷ Singers may find it challenging to count and sing steady duplets against the accompaniment’s triplets and lack of a down-beat. In fact, the vocal part and the accompaniment only line up on three occasions where the bass clef chords sound on the downbeat (mm. 20, 22 and 26). Therefore, singers need to lock in on the beat in m. 14 and feel a strong one and three pulse, regardless of the accompaniment.

Above this “pulsating” accompaniment, singers should strive for beautiful legato phrasing. When singing Filumena’s soaring lines, singers may find it helpful to slightly modify towards more open vowels on any notes above E5 or F5. In addition, raising the soft palate, and relaxing the tongue and jaw will help to free the sound and avoid excess tension.

At this moment, Filumena finds herself needing to ask God “What is true?” because despite what she knows to be true and that she never intended to kill Lawson, the truth has put her in jail and sentenced her to death.⁴⁰⁸ As Estacio points out, “it’s as if she has begun to believe all the lies being told about her” and by asking God, she is “trying to confirm and console herself that the truth will be revealed eventually. [...] The truth has not set her free at this moment in her life. [...] But God knows what the truth actually is.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴⁰⁶ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 131-132 (Act 1, Scene 3: mm. 248-260, Filumena’s words quoted in mm. 254-256).

⁴⁰⁷ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴⁰⁸ Refer to mm. 25-28 of the author’s “May God Forgive Him” adaptation.

⁴⁰⁹ Estacio, Interview with author.

Singers should use the following short interlude (mm. 30-32) to transition from the large, external expression of Section A to the more quiet and intimate atmosphere of Section B. As Filumena’s thoughts turn towards her mother, she says, “e allora,” which roughly translates to, “and so.” When Filumena prepares to depart for her new life with Charlie in Act 1, Scene 1, she comforts her mother and promises to always remain “Filumena.”⁴¹⁰ In Section B of “May God Forgive Him,” Estacio recapitulates their duet music as Filumena bids her mother a final farewell (despite the fact that she is not physically present) and promises to always remain with her in spirit. As can be seen from the excerpts below, these two scenes parallel each other using similar wording, although the latter carries a greater sense of finality:

Io sarò felice, Mamma.
 I will learn, I will try to be happy.
 Inside my heart, inside my heart,
 I will keep my own name.
 And although we will live apart now,
 I will try to lead a good life,
 I will try to live a new life
 But to stay, but to stay,
 Filumena, Filumena.⁴¹¹

Io sarò felice, Mamma.
 I will learn what it means to be happy,
 Inside my heart, inside God’s heart,
 I will have my own name.
 And, although we will live apart now,
 I will be with you forever,
 In the winter in the springtime,
 In the snow, in the rain.
 Forever Filumena, forever!⁴¹²

Estacio keeps the melody and accompaniment of these two scenes very similar; however in the aria, he omits the harp glissandi and specifies that it should be played slower.⁴¹³ This thinner orchestration and slower pace contribute to a more solitary and bleak affect. Estacio expands the ending of this section by developing the “Filumena Motive” and using the full sound of the orchestra while Filumena sings “Filumena forever!”

⁴¹⁰ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 16-18 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 184-209).

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Refer to mm. 33-63 of the author’s “May God Forgive Him” adaptation.

⁴¹³ Refer to the note in Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 16.

(mm. 53-68).⁴¹⁴ The accompaniment continues with the “Filumena Motive,” moving up an octave each time (mm. 64-68).

Section C opens with a light sprinkling of rain depicted by the harp’s descending sixteenth-note patterns (Ex. 37). Hearing this, Filumena realizes that a storm approaches and the music recapitulates the A Section of “The Storm Aria.” Most of the phrases begin as they did in the previous aria. However, Estacio changes the latter half of the phrases so that they end more triumphantly with *crescendi* and large leaps up to *forte* high notes. These exclamatory phrase endings help portray Filumena’s final liberation through the storm (Ex. 38). Singers should keep in mind to prepare for these large high-note leaps at the beginning of phrases rather than right before the high note. Singers should also ensure to raise the soft palate, use their breath support to negotiate leaps, and move quickly from the beginning consonant of the high note straight to the vowel. Underneath Filumena’s held high notes, Estacio features the “Storm Motive” in the accompaniment (mm. 76-77 and 81, see Ex. 38).

In the last phrase of Section C (mm. 82-87), Murrell changes “The Storm Aria’s” words into past tense: “I could have run to somewhere safe.”⁴¹⁵ This phrase now stands like a metaphor for her life because although she could have escaped from the Picariello men, she loved being with Steve and the excitement of their bootlegging adventures. Estacio explains this metaphor:

Ultimately what she liked the most was that she was connecting with this young man [...] [and] this drama that swirled into her life. She just used to be some little girl with her mom and dad and suddenly now [...] she means

⁴¹⁴ Refer to Ex. 35 for “Filumena Motive.”

⁴¹⁵ Refer to the author’s adaptations of “The Storm Aria” (m. 34) and “May God Forgive Him” (mm. 82-83).

something to people, she has purpose, and she has a role. She had a life with [Steve], she had a connection with Picariello, and she loved it all.”⁴¹⁶

Instead of propelling forward into the storm as in “The Storm Aria,” Estacio inverts the last phrase of the C Section (mm. 82-87) so that it descends, leading into the Coda as it slows down and grows softer.

In the Coda, Estacio incorporates music from the close of “The Storm Aria,” yet at a much slower, *molto sostenuto* tempo (♩ = 72).⁴¹⁷ Unlike the previous aria, Estacio has not included any *con rubato* markings so singers should keep this section in tempo except for the *a piacere* on the high C in m. 95. Singers may take time on this note but should keep the rest of the phrase going to maintain momentum and help portray the word, “fly.”⁴¹⁸ Singers may find it helpful to take a breath right before the C6 rather than after “storm” in m. 94 to properly set up the soft high note (Ex. 39). Estacio also differs the accompaniment of this section and features chiming church bells over slow, stepwise ascending chords to musically portray Filumena’s ascent to heaven (Ex. 40). Although marked very softly in the orchestra, pianists can afford to play a little fuller at perhaps a *mp* to *mf* range and build up to the long held notes at the end of each phrase. This will help emulate the fuller sound of the orchestra to support the singer, as well as give the piece a greater sense of forward momentum.

Instead of “Come storm and set me free” as in “The Storm Aria,” Filumena says “Come death and set me free.” She accepts her fate and comes to peace with her life and death. In his review of the opera, DeLong describes how powerfully moving he found

⁴¹⁶ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴¹⁷ In “The Storm Aria,” the last marked tempo before the Coda’s *con rubato* is ♩ = 144. In “May God Forgive Him,” Estacio marks the tempo at ♩ = 72.

⁴¹⁸ Estacio, Interview with author. Refer to Section 4.5.2.

Filumena's closing aria for it has "those qualities of catharsis and emotional release present only in major works for the theatre."⁴¹⁹ In this final phrase (m. 99-101), singers should take a big breath after "death" in m. 99 to highlight the word and to increase its dramatic effect (Ex. 41).⁴²⁰ In regards to the *ossia* line, Estacio prefers the original ending with the high A♭ as long as singers can "keep it quiet and sing the vowel intelligibly as the word 'free.'"⁴²¹ If singers find that they have to modify the vowel so that it no longer sounds like "free," then they should switch to the *ossia* line. Singers may find it easier to maintain the [i] vowel of "free" by keeping the tongue forward as they lift the soft palate and drop the jaw.

(For audition purposes, pianists may opt to cut the postlude.) In the postlude (mm. 101-108), the accompaniment continues its stepwise ascent, highlighted by the chiming of bells. In the DVD recording of the opera, Filumena walks upstage towards the sun setting on the mountains.⁴²² She is finally at peace as the curtain closes on the stage.

⁴¹⁹ DeLong, "Filumena Debuts Fully Formed."

⁴²⁰ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² *Filumena*, produced by Jean Patenaude and Patio Olson, directed for TV by Eric Till (Edmonton: Filu Productions, The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and CBC Television, 2007), DVD, (Act 1, Scene 9).

Ex. 35 Melody based on the “Storm Motive,” mm. 12-14.⁴²³

Musical score for Ex. 35. The treble clef staff features a melody starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth notes, with the second, third, and fourth measures each containing a triplet of eighth notes. The bass clef staff provides a simple accompaniment with long notes and rests.

Ex. 36 Off-beat triplet rhythm in the accompaniment, mm. 16-18.

Musical score for Ex. 36. Both the treble and bass clef staves feature a consistent off-beat triplet rhythm. The treble clef staff uses eighth notes, while the bass clef staff uses quarter notes. The music is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Ex. 37 Light sprinkling of rain, mm. 69-70.

Musical score for Ex. 37. The treble clef staff features a light, sprinkling effect, with two measures highlighted in boxes. The first measure is marked *mp* and includes an 8va (octave up) marking and a *loco* instruction. The second measure is marked *p*. The bass clef staff provides a simple accompaniment with long notes and rests.

⁴²³ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “May God Forgive Him” adaptation.

Ex. 38 "Storm Motive," mm. 73-77.

p dolce
There will be a storm to - night... I loved a storm!
f

Ex. 39 Suggested breath, mm. 94-95.

p a piacere
come, storm, and let me fly...
mp

Ex. 40 Ascending stepwise melody, mm. 96-99.

(Bells)
pp *mf* *pp*

Ex. 41 Suggested breath, mm. 99-101.

The musical score for Ex. 41, mm. 99-101, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 99-100) is marked *Ritenuato* and *p*. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics "Come, death, and set me free!" with a breath mark above the final note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a melodic line in the upper voice of the left hand and a bass line. The second system (m. 101) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, marked *pp*.

4.6.3 Adaptation Notes

In mm. 2-4, Picariello's "Dio" lines have been incorporated into the piano accompaniment – mostly in the upper voice of the left hand.⁴²⁴ The upper two staves of the vocal score reduction have been condensed into one part in mm. 63-68 to facilitate legibility and to maintain as much information of the orchestral reduction as possible.⁴²⁵ Given the choice, however, pianists should play the topmost part as it features the melody. In the Coda, the bells' part (as marked in the score) has also been condensed into one staff.⁴²⁶ For the most part, pianists should be able to play both the main accompaniment and the bells part through pedaling. From mm. 96-99, they should strive to play as much of the right hand notes as possible while giving precedence to the bells' line.

⁴²⁴ Estacio and Murrell, *Filumena*, vocal score, 299 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 129-131).

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 302-303 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 190-195).

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 304-306 (Act 2, Scene 9: mm. 215-233).

5. *LILLIAN ALLING*

5.1 Background

Produced as a co-production with The Banff Centre for the Arts, *Lillian Alling* received its premiere in Vancouver during Vancouver Opera's 50th anniversary season on 16 October 2010, followed by performances at the 2011 Banff Summer Festival.⁴²⁷ The work was presented as a "grand opera" with multimedia projections, six principal roles, forty chorus members, and a large sixty-piece orchestra.⁴²⁸ Including production, commission, and workshop fees, *Lillian Alling* cost \$1.7 million, approximately seventy percent more than a typical Vancouver Opera production.⁴²⁹ (The Vancouver Foundation contributed \$100,000 in support of the project.)⁴³⁰ Despite the financial risks of presenting a new work, Vancouver Opera's general director James W. Wright believes that opera companies "have an obligation to keep refreshing the art form, keep refreshing the repertoire and bringing new pieces in."⁴³¹ Over the years, Vancouver Opera has adhered to these aims by commissioning other Canadian operas, including *The Architect* (1991) by David K. MacIntyre and Tom Cone, *Stickboy* (2014) by Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan,

⁴²⁷ The Banff Centre production featured the young artists in their program with the exception of Judith Forst, who played the role of Irene. Alexandra Gill, "Vancouver Opera to Stage Tale of an Arctic Journey," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 March 2006, accessed 10 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/383565784?accountid=14656>.

⁴²⁸ Drew Hoshkiw, "Crossing Continents with Opera," *Rocky Mountain Outlook*, 11 August 2011, accessed 10 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/884432259?accountid=14656>.

⁴²⁹ Marsha Lederman, "Opera Interview: Going the Distance for Lillian Alling," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 December 2009, R7, accessed 10 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1418754151?accountid=14656>; and Thomas May, "An Ambitious World Premiere at Vancouver Opera," *Crosscut.com*, 20 October 2010, accessed 10 September 2016, <http://crosscut.com/2010/10/an-ambitious-world-premiere-at-vancouver-opera>.

⁴³⁰ "A Long and Winding Road," Vancouver Foundation, 14 December 2010, accessed 1 October 2016, <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/whats-new/long-and-winding-road>.

⁴³¹ Lederman, "Opera Interview."

and a school tour production, *Naomi's Road* (2005) by Ramona Luengen and Ann Hodges.⁴³²

For *Lillian Alling*, Vancouver Opera turned to the well-established opera creative team, "The Johns" (see Chapter 4). Having already written two operas together, Wright felt that John Murrell and John Estacio's great expertise and cohesion would best suit Vancouver Opera's new endeavour:

"The two Johns" – Murrell and Estacio – have developed into a wonderful operatic team. I believe that allowing a creative team to develop over the creation of more than work is very important. Think of the great opera-writing teams: Mozart and da Ponte (*The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*), Verdi and Piave (*Rigoletto*, *Macbeth*, *La Forza del Destino*), Strauss and Hofmannsthal (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra*). They were able to work together over the course of years, learning from one another, bending to accommodate one another's strengths, developing a cohesiveness that comes only from experience. [...] this is a team that is seasoned and in its prime.⁴³³

In addition, Wright wanted a composer with a musical style that audiences would quickly understand and knew that Estacio's accessible compositional writing, with its "heart-on-sleeve romantic, full of triadic comforts and lush orchestration" would "help dispel [the audiences'] doubts and concerns about contemporary music and new works."⁴³⁴ As Thomas May points out, Estacio's style throughout *Lillian Alling* "shows no interest in experimenting with unusual musical language or new techniques; instead, it relies with a middlebrow (at times, unabashedly sentimental) confidence on the dependable tropes of

⁴³² Refer to Chapter 6 for discussion on *Stickboy*.

⁴³³ James W. Wright, "Words + Music = Great Opera," Vancouver Opera's *Lillian Alling* Blog, 3 February 2010, accessed 1 October 2016, <http://lillianallingopera.blogspot.ca/2010/02/words-music-great-opera.html>.

⁴³⁴ Bill Rankin, "World Premiere of *Lillian Alling*," *American Record Guide* 74, no. 1 (01, 2011): 28-29, accessed 5 October 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/850693026?accountid=14656>.

stage and film, translating these into persuasive and effective operatic terms.”⁴³⁵ Many reviewers also praise Estacio’s music for its “cinematic qualities,” which wonderfully illustrate *Lillian’s* picturesque journey – as Wright describes, like an “aural postcard from another time and place.”⁴³⁶

In this opera, Murrell and Estacio bring another Canadian historical figure to the stage. This time telling the story of Lillian Alling, a mysterious woman who left her homeland in search of a new life and who trekked through the wilderness all the way from New York to British Columbia just to return home again (see Section 5.3). *Lillian Alling*, like *Filumena*, sheds light on immigrants and their dreams of better lives in North America. Within the opera, Murrell frequently blends together several languages to present a diversity of cultures. For example in Act 1, Scene 2, Lillian arrives on Ellis Island with a “swarm of immigrants” speaking in a “babel of languages.”⁴³⁷ Dramaturg, Kelly Robinson also points out how Murrell’s use of various languages and story telling allow the audience to see through the scope of different cultures:

It's a multilingual opera - we hear the immigrant dream expressed from several different cultures, [...] We get to hear a little of the various languages that make up the mosaic of North America and one of the astonishing achievements of the opera is through the layers of storytelling we get the sense of the dream of people who came to this wilderness a hundred years ago and the effort and ambition and the hopes and dreams that they applied to living in a new land.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ May, “An Ambitious World Premiere at Vancouver Opera.”

⁴³⁶ Bob Clark, “Woman’s Journeys Brought to Life in Canadian Opera,” *Calgary Herald*, 20 August 2011, accessed 10 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/884660980?accountid=14656>; and James W. Wright, “Workshop #4 Update,” Vancouver Opera’s *Lillian Alling* Blog, 28 May 2009, accessed 1 October 2016, <http://lillianallingopera.blogspot.ca/2009/05/workshop-4-update.html>.

⁴³⁷ Refer to stage direction in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, n.p., 2010, copy obtained from Vancouver Opera Association, 29 (Act 1, Scene 2).

⁴³⁸ Hoshkiw, “Crossing Continents with Opera.”

Estacio's music takes us along Lillian's journey by musically portraying the various regions she passes through. As he describes it, *Lillian Alling* is a "road opera," and like a road movie – one of his favourite film genres – "different types of music suggest different moods, characters, and movement."⁴³⁹ For example, in New York, some Brooklyn boys sing a 1920's "jazzy barbershop quartet;" in North Dakota, Norwegian farmers enjoy a barn dance accompanied by Scandinavian folk dances in the orchestra and onstage band; and at Oakalla Prison in British Columbia, the prisoners sing a work song adapted from a "quasi-Anglican Presbyterian hymn."⁴⁴⁰ In addition, to highlight Lillian's Russian background, Estacio integrates "whiffs of Russian Folk music" and a zither.⁴⁴¹

To further illustrate the opera's changing landscape, Estacio also adds recorded sound effects such as bird songs of the Pacific Northwest (Act 1, Scene 1) and the American Mid-west (Act 1, Scene 5), city port noises of Ellis Island with ship and tug whistles, fog horns, and buggy bells (Act 1, Scene 2), New York City traffic noises (Act 1, Scene 3), a 1920's train locomotive whistle (Act 1, Scene 5), and the sound of seagulls and buoy bells by Stanley Park, Vancouver (Act 1, Scene 12).⁴⁴² He also musically depicts many of these sounds in the opera's orchestration, such as bird songs (Ex. 42) and telegraph clicks (Act 1,

⁴³⁹ Stuart Derdeyn, "Lillian Alling – Road Opera Heroine: 'Wild West' Tale of a Russian Woman's Trek Across the Continent," *The Province*, 14 October 2010, accessed 2 October 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/758776570?accountid=14656>.

⁴⁴⁰ "John Estacio Talks About *Lillian Alling*," YouTube video, 3:50, posted by "Vancouveropera," 15 October 2010, accessed 5 September 2016, <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=x0RS9v0evPY>. For musical examples, refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, "jazzy barbershop quartet": 63-71 (Act 1, Scene 4: "Polly from Poughkeepsie"); "Scandinavian folk dance music" in Act 1, Scene 7: 103-109 (mm. 1-80), 110-117 (mm. 95-178), 121-123 (mm. 254-274), and 130-131 (mm. 336-346); and "quasi-Anglican Presbyterian hymn music": 187-192 (Act 1, Scene 9: mm. 46-90).

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. For an example of Russian folk music, refer to "Petya's Theme" in Sections 5.5.2 and 5.6.2.

⁴⁴² Refer to the stage directions in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 1 (Act 1, Scene 1: birdsong), and 29 (Act 1, Scene 2: Ellis Island), 48 (Act 1, Scene 3: New York City), 75 and 94 (Act 1, Scene 5: birdsong and train whistle), and 258 (Act 1, Scene 8: Vancouver).

Scene 8).⁴⁴³ In addition, Estacio uses “new rhythmic figures” in the accompaniment to “enhance the sense of Lillian’s motion as she walks along her path” (Ex. 45).⁴⁴⁴ As May points out, “Estacio has an almost Straussian affinity for imitative effects and wields his orchestral and choral forces with vibrant colors.”⁴⁴⁵

When it comes to the story, Estacio says: “John Murrell is great at finding these seemingly buried stories, characters, and tales.”⁴⁴⁶ Murrell discovered Lillian’s story in a book that he picked up while in Banff, Rosemary Neering’s *Wild West Women: Travellers, Adventurers and Rebels*.⁴⁴⁷ Since much of Lillian’s story takes place in British Columbia and the Vancouver area, “The Johns” thought it perfect for Vancouver Opera.⁴⁴⁸ No one really knows why Lillian was so fiercely determined to walk across the continent and whether or not she ever made it to her final destination, however, in *Lillian Alling*, Murrell and Estacio creatively mapped out their own journey for her with a surprising twist at the end.⁴⁴⁹ Murrell describes how the two of them felt “convinced that perhaps there was a reason that she cloaked herself in mystery,” so they “spent a lot of time not just digging for research, but digging into [their] imaginations, trying to come up with a cohesive storyline that preserved her heroism and her mystery and her determination, but also in some ways solved the mystery.”⁴⁵⁰ Only knowing a small part in the middle of Lillian’s journey, Murrell and Estacio took up the challenge of composing a beginning, an ending, and a purpose for

⁴⁴³ For an example of the telegraph music, refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 145-156 (Act 1, Scene 8: mm. 80-139).

⁴⁴⁴ “*Lillian Alling: This Land Is Large*,” Vancouver Opera’s *Lillian Alling* Blog, 29 June 2010, accessed 1 October 2016, <http://lillianallingopera.blogspot.ca/2010/06/lillian-alling-land-is-large.html>.

⁴⁴⁵ May, “An Ambitious World Premiere at Vancouver Opera.”

⁴⁴⁶ Derdeyn, “*Lillian Alling* – Road Opera Heroine.”

⁴⁴⁷ Rosemary Neering, *Wild West Women: Travellers, Adventurers, and Rebels* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2000), 210-218.

⁴⁴⁸ Derdeyn, “*Lillian Alling* – Road Opera Heroine.”

⁴⁴⁹ See Section 5.3 for historical background on the life of Lillian Alling.

⁴⁵⁰ Lederman, “Opera Interview.”

her quest.⁴⁵¹ They also weaved into her life a story of danger, love, and revenge that had the audience “erupt[ing] into a rolling boil of applause at the final curtain.”⁴⁵²

5.2 List of Lead Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Vancouver Opera premiere of *Lillian Alling* on 16 October 2010.⁴⁵³

Lillian Alling (Soprano)	Frédérique Vézina
Irene MacDonald (Mezzo-soprano)	Judith Forst
Scotty MacDonald/Brooklyn Boy (Baritone)	Aaron St. Clair Nicholson
Jimmy (Tenor)	Roger Honeywell
Sergei/Constable Wyman/Jozéf (Baritone)	Thomas Goerz
Bobby/Kristian/Billy (Tenor)	Colin Ainsworth
Conductor: Jacques Lacombe	
Director: Kelly Robinson	

5.3 The Life of Lillian Alling

As previously mentioned, not much is known of Lillian Alling other than that in three years time, she trekked almost solely by foot across 9,650 km of territory.⁴⁵⁴ Like

⁴⁵¹ “An Interview with John Murrell and Frédérique Vézina.” YouTube video, 1:57, posted by “Vancouveropera,” 15 October 2010, accessed 5 September 2016, <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=L-fRTMTlwgg>.

⁴⁵² “A Message From John Murrell and John Estacio,” YouTube video, 4:56, posted by “Vancouveropera,” 16 October 2010, accessed 5 September 2016, <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=eGL3XogV4aU>. Quoted from Robert Jordon, “Vancouver,” *Opera Canada* 51, no. 4 (Winter, 2010): 44, accessed 5 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1015272724?accountid=14656>.

⁴⁵³ The following cast information has been gathered from: John Estacio, “*Lillian Alling*,” JohnEstacio.com, accessed 10 September 2016, http://www.johnestacio.com/Lillian_Alling.asp; and “*Lillian Alling: The Cast*,” Vancouver Opera Blog, 13 September 2010, accessed 9 January 2017, <http://vancouveropera.blogspot.ca/2010/09/lillian-alling-cast.html>.

Neeling says, “The small hill of information available about Lillian Alling’s odyssey is dwarfed by the mountain that is unknown.”⁴⁵⁵ No one can say with absolute certainty where she came from, when she arrived, and why she wanted to return home so much so that she would endure the harsh wilderness of Northern North America.⁴⁵⁶ Newspapers tracking her progress at the time referred to her as “The Mystery Woman.”⁴⁵⁷ Lillian’s story remains alluring to many and has also inspired a few novels such as Amy Bloom’s *Away* and Cassandra Pybus’ *The Woman Who Walked to Russia*.⁴⁵⁸

In her book, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, Susan Smith has compiled the most thorough research of Lillian’s journey.⁴⁵⁹ According to Smith, Lillian most likely emigrated from Poland to Canada, then moved to the United States sometime between 1921-1926.⁴⁶⁰ A border-crossing document dated 26 December 1926 shows that she left New York State and crossed into Canada at Niagara Falls, Ontario. On it, she stated that she was thirty years old, born in Poland, and that she had lived in Toronto from 1915-1920.⁴⁶¹ However, many people also believe Lillian emigrated from Russia, perhaps because from 1890-1930, 5.5 million Russian immigrants arrived in Ellis Island due to The Russian Revolution.⁴⁶² Regardless of her nationality, Lillian probably came from an upper or aristocratic class based on peoples’ description of her being a well-educated and well-spoken woman.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁴ Susan Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home* (Halfmoon Bay, British Columbia: Caitlin Press Inc., 2011), 20.

⁴⁵⁵ Neering, *Wild West Women*, 212.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-212.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁵⁸ Refer to: Amy Bloom, *Away* (New York: Random House, 2007); and Cassandra Pybus, *The Woman Who Walked to Russia* (Toronto: T. Allen Publishers, 2002).

⁴⁵⁹ The following information about Lillian Alling and relative historical material has been gathered from Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 and 29.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 21-24; and Neering, *Wild West Women*, 210.

⁴⁶³ Neering, *Wild West Women*, 211.

So why did Lillian want to return home? During the time she lived in New York City (c. 1921- 1926), immigrants and their families made up about seventy-five percent of New York's four million residents.⁴⁶⁴ Between 1908-1920, over one-third of these immigrants returned home and during the Great Depression, more people left than came.⁴⁶⁵ From what little Lillian had told others, she like the many immigrants who returned home, could not adjust to life in the New World. Smith describes how not every immigrant found comfort in the "North American dream" and that for many of them, the dream had become a "nightmare" in which they had to "either endure a life of misery in their adopted country or return home."⁴⁶⁶

While in New York, Lillian most likely worked as a domestic housekeeper. Since most jobs such as this deducted living expenses, she probably figured that she would never earn enough money to purchase a ticket home by ship.⁴⁶⁷ Instead, after studying maps at the New York Public Library, she decided to walk home by going through British Columbia, Yukon, and Alaska, crossing the Bering Strait to Siberia, and then hiking through the Ural Mountains to Russia.⁴⁶⁸

According to Smith's research, Lillian most-likely crossed Ontario through the cities of Hamilton, Toronto, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, and Kenora. On 1 March 1927, she arrived in Winnipeg, then travelled through Kamsack and Wakaw, Saskatchewan, and reached Grande Prairie, Alberta on 15 June 1927. In September 1927, Lillian finally arrived in Hazelton, British Columbia where she began to head up the Telegraph Trail, an arduous

⁴⁶⁴ Neering, *Wild West Women*, 210.

⁴⁶⁵ The following immigration information has been gathered from Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, 17-18.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

500 km footpath following the Yukon Telegraph.⁴⁶⁹ Built in 1901 during the Klondike Gold Rush, The Yukon Telegraph ran through the towns of Ashcroft, Hazelton, and Atlin, British Columbia to Dawson City, Yukon. Along the trail, fourteen cabins spaced forty kilometers apart were each manned by an operator to relay messages and a lineman for maintenance. However, when Lillian travelled through this area, only six of the eleven stations remained open: Cabin Two, Four, Six, Eight, and Echo Lake.

Lillian reached Cabin Two on 19 September 1927 and met telegrapher, Bill Blackstock who tried to warn her about the approaching treacherous winter conditions. Not able to dissuade her from continuing, he telegraphed Constable George A. Wyman for help. When Wyman met Lillian, he noticed how poorly equipped she was for the journey: “so scantily clad and had no firearms or anything to see her through that country. [...] she was wearing running shoes. She had a knapsack with a half-dozen sandwiches in it, some tea and some other odds and ends, a comb and personal effects.”⁴⁷⁰ To prevent her from continuing during the winter, Wyman arrested her and took her to Hazelton where officers attempted to charge her for vagrancy. However, since she carried twenty dollars they instead charged her for carrying a concealed weapon – an iron bar. At her hearing, Lillian remained silent until, after being asked four times if she wanted to speak on her behalf, she spoke “four loud clear words, astonishing in their obscenity.”⁴⁷¹

The judge gave Lillian the option of paying a twenty-five dollar fine or serving two months at the Oakalla Prison Farm in Burnaby, British Columbia. This prison had a reputation for its harsh treatment in which “prisoners were subject to brutal discipline,

⁴⁶⁹ The following information about the Yukon Telegraph has been gathered from Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, 50-53.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

forced to work in silence during the day and segregated in separate cells at night."⁴⁷² Since she lacked the money, Lillian had to serve the prison sentence; thereby accomplishing Wyman's effort to keep her safe during the winter.

After her sentence, Lillian spent the next six months working in the Vancouver area until the weather was safe enough to travel again. In May 1928, she restarted her journey and arrived at the Hyder, Alaska border-crossing on 6 June 1928. Unfortunately, the customs officer there turned her away for not having a valid visa so Lillian had no choice but to return to her original plan and go up the Telegraph Trail.

Lillian made it to Hazelton on 20 June 1928 and headed up the Telegraph Trail, stopping at the cabins along the way for food, rest, and company. The telegraphers kept track of her progress by chatting back and fourth through the wire. This kept local newspapers who also used the telegraph updated on her progress.⁴⁷³ The linemen tried to help Lillian as much as possible and sadly, on 8 July 1928, lineman Scotty Ogilvie died while attempting to meet and escort her up the trail.

Lillian continued through Telegraph Creek, Shesley Station, Nahlin, and Atlin, British Columbia. She reached Tagish, Yukon on 24 August 1938 and continued through Carcross and Whitehorse to arrive in Dawson City on 5 October 1938. There, she decided to wait out the winter and at one point, she worked at St. Paul's Hostel where the principal, Charles F. Johnson gives a detailed description of her personality:

She tried working in several places but people soon got rid of her as she is not much use. We took her in and gave her a home and thought that we might be able to straighten her up and polish the rough corners off for a bit

⁴⁷² Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, 69.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

but it is an uphill job. She is uncouth, proud and ignorant and of uncertain temper and there is very little she can do.⁴⁷⁴

Smith points out that Lillian “thriv[ed] on solitude in the wilderness for extensive periods,” therefore, it must have greatly frustrated her to be cooped up inside and in such close proximity to others.⁴⁷⁵ On 21 May 1929, Lillian left Dawson City and continued to Nome, Alaska. She then left Nome in early September and walked towards Cape Prince of Wales where she hoped to hire someone to ferry her across the eighty-four-kilometre stretch of the Bering Strait to Siberia.⁴⁷⁶ From here on, Lillian’s trail fades away with no solid evidence and with much hearsay of what may have happened to her.

Smith describes Lillian’s personality as “decisive, singled-minded, [and] focused” for she “never wavered in her determination to go home [... and] didn’t allow other people’s negative opinions to sway her.”⁴⁷⁷ Her determination, focus, and bravery often came across as crazy to many of those who met her.⁴⁷⁸ However, as Smith points out, these attributes “not only kept Lillian going but also kept her alive in circumstances that would have killed lesser people.”⁴⁷⁹ Lillian’s experiences also transformed her from someone “so afraid of people she carried an iron bar for protection to trusting hundreds of strangers” and as Smith points out, “because she learned to trust people, she survived through their help and her own strong character.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁴ Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, 164.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

5.4 Opera Synopsis

Act 1, Scene 1: In the autumn of 1980, Jimmy helps his mother, Irene, pack up and move from her cabin in the woods to a care-home in Vancouver.⁴⁸¹ He finds a carved wooden box with an old-fashioned “perpetual motion” top inside.⁴⁸² Irene explains that it once belonged to Lillian Alling, a mysterious woman who “vanished into the wilderness up North more than fifty years ago.”⁴⁸³ As they start their drive towards the city and Irene begins to tell Lillian’s tale.

Act 1, Scene 2: In the early spring of 1927 on Ellis Island, New York, Lillian makes her way through a crowd of arriving immigrants in search of her lover, Jozéf Nikitich, who had arrived in North America three years before. In only a week, she manages to track down his residence with the very vague address of “Brooklyn, U.S.A.”

Act 1, Scene 3: Lillian knocks on the door of Sergei Nikitich, Jozéf’s brother. She explains that Jozéf had helped her family to get papers to come to America and that he had asked her to marry him once she arrived in the New World. Shocked by Lillian’s story, Sergei tells her that Jozéf lost his factory job two years ago after getting into too many drunken brawls. Soon after, he left without a word to work at a farm in North Dakota. Sergei and his wife try to dissuade Lillian from continuing her search because of Jozéf’s reputation for philandering, but she refuses to listen.

Act 1, Scene 4: In hopes of finding a map of North America, Lillian asks a bunch of young boys for directions to a library. They tease and flirt with her until a lady walking by overhears and gives her directions.

⁴⁸¹ The following opera synopsis has been gathered from: Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score; and Estacio, “*Lillian Alling*,” JohnEstacio.com.

⁴⁸² Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 15 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 129-130).

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 19 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 159-162).

Act 1, Scene 5: In the truck headed towards Vancouver, Irene explains how Lillian copied a map from a library book and made her way northwest “alone and on foot” through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Scranton, and Toledo.⁴⁸⁴ The scene shifts to follow Lillian as she journeys through the Midwest.

At first Lillian marvels at the land around her but her thoughts soon turn to Jozéf. A traumatic memory from her past comes to life before her in which her mother can barely scream in fear as menacing soldiers head towards Petya, Lillian’s brother, obviously playing with his “perpetual motion” top. A cry of a night bird startles Lillian out of her nightmare and she once again vows to find Jozéf, saying: “I will find you no matter how. My life is bound to your life.”⁴⁸⁵ A drifter appears and shows Lillian how to catch a train to North Dakota.

Act 1, Scene 6: Irene reflects on Lillian’s determination to find Jozéf and the song she always sang to herself: “I open my eyes, I pick up my pack, I take the first step, I never look back.”⁴⁸⁶ Irene realizes that today, as she moves to a new chapter in her life, she should also take heed of Lillian’s advice: “The answers I lack lie further ahead, I never, I never look back.”⁴⁸⁷

Act 1, Scene 7: After two weeks on the train, Lillian arrives in North Dakota where some Norwegian farmers take part in a barn dance. She heads towards them and almost collapses from exhaustion. With bitterness, Karl, the farm owner explains that Jozéf snuck off a month ago with his best pair of boots and that he has no idea where Jozéf has gone. Lillian despairs but Kristian, Karl’s son tells her that Jozéf has gone to Telegraph Creek,

⁴⁸⁴ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 72-74 (Act 1, Scene 5).

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 89 (Act 1, Scene 5: mm. 178-182).

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 100 (Act 1, Scene 6: mm. 19-23).

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 100-101 (Act 1, Scene 6: mm. 27-31).

British Columbia – “the wildest heart of the wilderness” – to make it rich in the gold rush.⁴⁸⁸

Kristian tries to dissuade Lillian from following Jozéf but eventually gives her a map of the telegraph lines.

Act 1, Scene 8: Irene and Jimmy stop for lunch on the side of the highway, and she continues her story. Having passed through Saskatchewan and Alberta, Lillian has finally arrived at the Telegraph Trail in British Columbia. As she makes her way up the trail, the telegraph linemen tap messages back and forth to track her progress. Lillian accidentally startles lineman, Scotty Macdonald as she tries to sneak off with food from his cabin. (When Irene mentions Scotty’s name, Jimmy suddenly realizes that she is talking about his father who had died before he had the chance to know him.) Scotty tries to convince Lillian to rest a few days at his cabin when Constable Wyman appears. Having received numerous complaints about her stealing food, he arrests her for carrying a concealed gun.

Act 1, Scene 9: Jimmy overwhelms Irene with questions about his father and Lillian. Even though Irene struggles emotionally, she continues her story because she wants Jimmy to learn the truth before she goes. Having been charged with vagrancy and for carrying an unlicensed firearm, Lillian spends the winter at the Oakalla Prison Farm near Vancouver.

Act 2, Scene 10: Jimmy and Irene head back onto the road and Irene once again continues her story. In the spring of 1928, Lillian finishes a shift waitressing at a café and heads out into the Vancouver rain where she runs into Scotty. He has tracked her down in hopes to explain to her that he only wanted to help her. Still angry with him over her arrest, she pushes him away.

⁴⁸⁸ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 124 (Act 1, Scene 7: mm. 293-295).

Act 2, Scene 11: The rain pours down as Jimmy tries to fix his truck's broken windshield wipers. He eventually gives up and decides to continue onwards, driving slowly. Irene explains that the reason Lillian stayed in Vancouver was so that she could earn enough money to continue her journey.

The next day in 1928, Lillian heads to work where, once again, Scotty is waiting for her. He tries to explain to her that all he wanted to do the day they met was get to know her: "As soon as I saw you I could see that you were someone I had to know."⁴⁸⁹ Lillian finally gives in and tells him to meet her at Stanley Park on Sunday.

Act 2, Scene 12: A few days later, Lillian and Scotty enjoy a picnic in Stanley Park. Scotty cannot understand why Lillian continues to pursue Jozéf, especially since he does not seem to care for her. She finally reveals to him the truth about her past; Jozéf is not her lover but the man who betrayed her family. Instead of helping them escape Russia, he sold them to soldiers who treated them so badly that only Lillian managed to survive. She explains that she came to the New World to find Jozéf. Hearing her story, Scotty promises to help her in her quest.

Act 2, Scene 13: As they approach Vancouver, Irene asks Jimmy to pull over so she can finish the rest of her story. In early April 1928, Lillian snuck off without Scotty to make her way through the rough terrain up to Telegraph Creek. Even though she had a week's head start, Scotty pursued her.

Act 2, Scene 14: Early one morning, Lillian stumbles upon Jozéf panning for gold in a creek. She confronts him and reveals her real name, Sofia Petrovna Abramov. (Lillian Alling had been her mother's name.) Jozéf tackles her to the ground and begins to choke her when

⁴⁸⁹ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 248 (Act 2, Scene 11: mm. 71-74).

Scotty appears. A struggle ensues in which Lillian ends up killing Jozéf with his rifle. Scotty quickly hides the body and tells Lillian that they did this together and that together, they will start a new life. He gives her a new name, his grandmother's name, Irene Macdonald for "it's a name without sadness or shame in its past."⁴⁹⁰

At last, Jimmy realizes with shock and admiration that his mother is Lillian Alling. Finally at peace, Irene says, "The past has found its voice at last, and the future has begun."⁴⁹¹

5.5 "This Land Is Large"

5.5.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of Lillian Alling would suit full lyric sopranos with a coloratura extension. Compared with Filumena, Lillian requires a slightly larger or more concentrated voice with the ability to cut through the opera's heavier orchestration and to fill out Estacio's "up swell of dramatic soprano writing."⁴⁹² Lillian's vocal lines tend to sit relatively high in the tessitura with large leaps up to soaring high notes, therefore singers will also need vocal flexibility and agility in the upper *passaggio* (Ex. 46). Both vocally challenging and lengthy, her arias require endurance and the role overall calls for physical and vocal stamina as Lillian rarely leaves the stage.

Lillian is a complex character with a hidden past (see character discussion below). Her arias give singers the opportunity to showcase their acting skills for within them,

⁴⁹⁰ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 322 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 185-189).

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 334 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 304-308).

⁴⁹² John Estacio, Interview with author, 25 January 2017. Quoted from May, "An Ambitious World Premiere at Vancouver Opera."

Lillian goes through a wide range of emotions as her memories come to life like vivid nightmares before her eyes.

Range: D4-C6

Character: Throughout the opera, Lillian is described as a “very tall” Russian woman “with white-blond, sun-bleached hair.”⁴⁹³ In Murrell and Estacio’s story, they allude to her being of Jewish descent, hence why her family sought escape from Europe in the decade leading to the rise of Hitler.⁴⁹⁴ When Lillian arrives in New York, she has very few belongings with her and her status would have been similar to that of a peasant.⁴⁹⁵ However, Estacio and Murrell believe that she had a privileged upbringing in Russia, thus explaining her resourcefulness in adapting and navigating her surroundings and her ability to charm and obtain help from strangers.⁴⁹⁶

Estacio remarks, “Lillian is one of these characters that there’s a lot below the surface.”⁴⁹⁷ The arduous journey she undertakes alone demonstrates her great determination and strength. After seeing a photograph of Lillian taken in 1928, Murrell remarks that “something [...] just grabbed [him] [...] She has this look about her that just says ‘prepared for adventure,’ as though she was bred for this kind of thing.”⁴⁹⁸ In the opera, Murrell reflects the spark he noticed in Lillian’s photograph through Scotty who immediately becomes attracted to her tenacity, saying: “As soon as I saw you I could see

⁴⁹³ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 21-22, (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 178-179).

⁴⁹⁴ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ “John Estacio Talks About *Lillian Alling*,” YouTube video.

⁴⁹⁸ Derdeyn, “*Lillian Alling* – Road Opera Heroine.” There are two photos of Lillian Alling taken in 1928, one of which has been reproduced in Smith, *Lillian Alling: The Journey Home*, 16.

that you have courage and grit. Your chin was set, your eyes were lit with a fire, banked for now, but ready to burst into life!”⁴⁹⁹

Over the course of the opera, we learn that it is not Lillian’s adventuresome spirit that motivates her, but her hatred for Jozéf, as she declares: “My hatred has never failed me [...] it drives me on!”⁵⁰⁰ Lillian’s family perished because Jozéf betrayed them to soldiers and as a result, Estacio describes how Lillian “keeps her cards close to her chest. She is reticent and slow to trust people. She doesn’t reveal too much information because she knows that by revealing too much information you often get burned.”⁵⁰¹ Overtime, Scotty eventually breaks down the walls that Lillian built around herself, and she finally reveals the truth to him. Estacio explains how “when she does eventually trust someone, she is giving and open and very comfortable with that individual. It takes a long time to get to that point with this woman.”⁵⁰²

At the end of the opera, we learn that Lillian’s real name is Sofia Petrovna Abramov and that after her family died, she took up her mother’s maiden name, Lillian Alling, to hide her identity. The major twist of the opera reveals that Irene is in fact Lillian and that after she killed Jozéf, Scotty helped her to start a new life by giving her his grandmother’s name, Irene Macdonald – “Irene, the Greek word for peace.”⁵⁰³

Murrell feels that “Lillian Alling is above all a searcher, she’s looking for something.”⁵⁰⁴ Frédérique Vézina, who premiered the role points out that Lillian is also very “passionate” and whether or not she realizes it, “she is on a mission for love” and to

⁴⁹⁹ Estacio and Murrell, vocal score, *Lillian Alling*, 247 (Act 2, Scene 11: mm. 60-65).

⁵⁰⁰ Refer to the author’s “This Is the Truth” adaptation, mm. 159-161.

⁵⁰¹ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 333 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 193-195).

⁵⁰⁴ “An Interview with John Murrell and Frédérique Vézina,” YouTube video.

find peace in her life.⁵⁰⁵ Lillian believes that finding and confronting Jozéf will bring her solace, but in the end, Irene explains how it was actually Scotty's love that healed her:

The hatred was mine ... the pain and the fear ... which kept me alive from year to year ... All those days all those miles I traveled alone. With an unlikely story of love to shield me, until Scotty Macdonald's love revealed me.⁵⁰⁶

Setting: (Act 1, Scene 5) Lillian has left the busy cityscape of New York. She now walks through the beautiful countryside of the Midwest, "awed by the land, its stark beauty, and its promise of freedom."⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ "An Interview with John Murrell and Frédérique Vézina," YouTube video.

⁵⁰⁶ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 325-326 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 229-239).

⁵⁰⁷ James W. Wright, "Words + Music = Great Opera."

Aria 5: "This Land Is Large"⁵⁰⁸

SFX: Birdsong: birds of the American mid-west
With a sense of wonderment

Music: John Estacio
Libretto: John Murrell

♩ = 66

pp molto sostenuto,
with some ebb and flow

4

The land is large _____ and smooth and

6

green, I hear

mp 6 3

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⁵⁰⁸ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 75-89 (Act 1, Scene 5).

8

man-y birds, I hear no war, such

10 *poco strigendo*

qui - et I have not heard be - fore, a place of

poco strigendo

mp

13 **Con moto**

ques-tions, not an-swers, of mis - takes they do not call sins, here

16 *poco rit.*

no - thing, no - thing is end - ing, eve - ry - thing, eve - ry - thing be -

mp

18 **Più mosso** ♩ = 72

gins!

mf

20

The land is large _____ and smooth and

mp

22

green, a qui - et nev - er heard be -

24

fore, its' win-dows are op - en, so is its

26

door, a place of prai - ries, not gar - dens, not

28

ghet-tos and cit - ies but farms, not

30

sad - ness, not sha - dows, but sun - - light,

f

32

eve - ry - thing, eve - ry - thing

mp

34

warms!

f

38 $(\text{♩}=72)$

I walk and the land comes

41

out to meet me. I rest

44

and the land lies down for a while.

47

The land stretch-es out its hand to greet me,

51

mile af - ter mile af - ter mile, af - ter mile...

55 *(She stops and builds a fire, as twilight falls.)*

58 *a tempo*

The land is large

poco rit. *a tempo*

ff mp

61

by day or night, a mu - sic nev - er

65

heard be - fore, I hear its

68

clear voice _____ in the te - le - graph lines:

71

"You are wel - come," it says, "Go

74

where you will, _____ here eve - ry - thing, eve -

77

- ry - thing shines!"

79 (She takes food from her suitcase, considers, then puts it away again.)

Musical score for measures 79-81. The vocal line (treble clef) has rests in measures 79 and 80, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in measure 81. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features triplets of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *f* and *p*.

Thou-sands and thou-sands and

82

Musical score for measures 82-84. The vocal line (treble clef) has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 82, followed by quarter notes in measure 83, and a half note in measure 84. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf*. The time signature changes to 5/4 in measure 84.

thou-sands come here, to find a life brand new,

85

Musical score for measures 85-87. The vocal line (treble clef) has rests in measures 85 and 86, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in measure 87. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features chords in the right hand and eighth-note patterns in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*. The time signature changes to 2/2 in measure 85.

Jo-zéf Ni-ki-tich comes seek-ing that, too...

88

Musical score for measures 88-90. The vocal line (treble clef) has quarter notes in measure 88, followed by a half note in measure 89, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 90. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features chords in the right hand and eighth-note patterns in the left hand. Dynamics include *f*. The time signature changes to 2/2 in measure 88.

I will find him, no mat-ter how

91

hard the jour - ney, I will find him,

94

no mat - ter how far. He was a

97

friend to my fam - i - ly, he helps us to get pa - pers...

101

But then eve - ry - thing, eve - ry - thing

104 *Meno mosso, with intensity* ♩ = 60

chan - ges...

106

Sud-den-ly___ there are sol - diers eve - ry - where...___

107

One mo - ment___ and the world can lose its

108

mind... the world can change for - ev - er!_____

Quasi marziale, pesante ♩ = 66

110

ff

8^{va}

3

114

Con moto

She wants to scream now, she needs to

ffp *f*

117

scream, but she can-not re

120 *rit.* *a tempo*

mem-ber how! _____ Help her, _____ Jo-

123

zéf, help her, _____ Jo - zéf!

126 **Meno mosso, with intensity** ♩ = 60

rit. I will find you _____ no mat-ter

129

how. My life is bound to

colla voce

131

your life.

mp

132

p.p.

5.5.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

In “This Land Is Large,” Lillian discovers her love of nature and the freedom of the wilderness. Estacio describes her as having “the heart of a poet, and the heart of an explorer [...] She enjoys the awe and wonder of the travels and the land she goes through.”⁵⁰⁹ Although burdened by the past and her mission to find Jozéf, this aria also captures Lillian’s sense that in this land of new beginnings, she might also be able to move forward with her life.⁵¹⁰

“This Land Is Large” follows the form of A1 (mm. 1-18), A2 (mm. 18-36), B (mm. 37-59), A3 (mm. 59-79), C (mm. 80-104), Recitative (mm. 104-109), D (mm. 110-126), and Coda (mm. 127-133). In Section A1 (mm. 1-18), Estacio notes in the score that the aria should open “with a sense of wonderment” as Lillian takes in the peaceful beauty and expansiveness of the land around her. Birdcalls of the “American Midwest” are interspersed throughout the accompaniment (Ex. 42).⁵¹¹ The phrase, “This land is large” (mm. 4-6) serves as the main theme of the aria (Ex. 43) and also recurs throughout the opera with some degree of variation as Lillian discovers new places along her journey. For example, this theme appears when she arrives at the Telegraph Trail (Act 2, Scene 8) and when she enjoys the view in Stanley Park (Act 2, Scene 12).⁵¹² The aria should begin at ♩ = 66, move slightly ahead in tempo at m. 10 with the *poco strigendo*, and arrive at ♩ = c. 70 at the *con moto* in m. 13. Lillian frequently repeats words consecutively and singers should strive to differentiate them in terms of vocal colour or emphasis to give each new meaning,

⁵⁰⁹ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Birdcalls are heard in the accompaniment and as taped sound effects as indicated in the stage directions in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 75 (Act 1, Scene 5).

⁵¹² Ibid., 143 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 49-64), and 258, (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 1-5).

such as in the phrases, “nothing, nothing is ending” (m. 16) and “everything, everything begins!” (m. 17). Singers should also use the *poco ritardando* in m. 16 to emphasize the second, “everything,” and use the word, “begin,” to set the *più mosso* tempo (♩ = 72) in m. 18.

As the pace picks up in Section A2 (mm. 18-36), the moving sixteenth-note accompaniment depicts Lillian’s motion through the land. The melodic bass line portrays her joyful steps while the treble octave pattern evokes the shimmering sunlight (Ex. 44). The main theme, “This Land Is Large,” appears again, this time with a larger upward leap to depict Lillian’s increased excitement (mm. 20-22). Singers should use their diction to highlight the alliteration in the phrases: “place of prairies, not gardens, not ghettos” (mm. 26-28) and “not sadness, not shadows, but sunlight” (mm. 29-32). Singers should also contrast Lillian’s love of the “prairies” with her dislike of the “ghettos” by colouring these words differently. The phrase, “its windows are open, so is its doors,” has special significance as Lillian later reverses these words to refuse Scotty’s help in Act 2, Scene 10: “My windows are locked and so are my doors. I do not want your help. I am better alone. You live your story, I will live my own.”⁵¹³ Singers may add a slight lift before, “but farms,” and a slight *ritardando* in m. 28 to highlight Lillian’s fascination with her surroundings and allow time to place the word, “sadness,” in m. 30. The tempo should then move forward through mm. 30-31 and relax again in m. 32. The first, “everything” in m. 33 should feel full and triumphant while the second should sound more tender and warm. In the interlude, pianists should play out to portray a feeling of carefree wonderment (mm. 34-35).

⁵¹³ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 236-237 (Act 2, Scene 10: mm. 103-110).

In Section B (mm. 37-59), the tempo suddenly doubles ($\downarrow = \downarrow$) and the accompaniment changes to an off-beat pattern as if Lillian has come across a different, more uneven terrain (Ex. 45). The accompaniment features similar music heard when she first arrives in Ellis Island and embarks on her journey (Act 1, Scene 2).⁵¹⁴ In mm. 36-37, the transition between sections should continue without a break and with a quick change in dynamic from *forte* to *mezzo piano*.⁵¹⁵ Here, Lillian personifies the land as her friend: “the land come out to meet me [...] the land stretches out its hand to greet me.”⁵¹⁶ In mm. 43-46, singers may relax the tempo to achieve a gentler affect as she says: “I rest, and the land lies down for a while.” In mm. 51-55, both singers and pianists should *crescendo* and build the phrase, “mile after mile” to depict Lillian’s fascination with the land’s grandeur. Pianists should continue this momentum in the interlude (mm. 55-59) to climax on the downbeat of m. 59.

The main theme of the aria returns, altered with higher pitches to depict Lillian’s even greater awe (Ex. 46). The accompaniment now repeats the theme as if to portray Lillian’s voice echoing back across the expansive land like “a music never heard before”⁵¹⁷ (Ex. 46). This time, as indicated by the stage directions at m. 56, Lillian sees her surroundings in a new way as twilight sets in around her. When performing this aria as a stand-alone piece, singers cannot demonstrate this change from day to night and instead, they should approach the return of the A material with a different sense of wonderment and excitement. From mm. 68-75, the accompaniment breaks from its triplet pattern and

⁵¹⁴ Refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 32-33 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 16-28) and 37-40 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 65-81).

⁵¹⁵ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵¹⁶ Refer to the author’s “This Land Is Large” adaptation, mm. 40-41 and 48-50.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, mm. 63-66.

mimics the “quick little burst of telegraphic rhythms” (Ex. 47), foreshadowing the “dit-dat” tapping music of the telegraph operators in Act 1, Scene 8.⁵¹⁸ Again, Lillian personifies the land and this time she imagines that it speaks and welcomes her (mm. 71-79). The A material returns in mm. 75-79 with “here everything, everything shines!” Singers should add a slight lift before the word “shines” and emphasize its beginning [f] consonant to highlight it. In Section B, many phrases begin in the lower register so singers should concentrate on finding a forward focus for the lower notes in order for them to be heard clearly, such as on “I hear” (m. 67), “you are” (m. 71), and “here” (m. 75).

Throughout the opera, Lillian encounters new people and each time she must explain the purpose of her journey. Therefore, many of the same textual and musical themes appear throughout the work. For example, in Section C, the words, “thousands and thousands and thousands come here to find a life brand new”⁵¹⁹ (mm. 81-84) stirs a musical theme first heard in Act 1, Scene 2 (Ex. 48, mm. 84-85) that evokes Lillian’s determination and the hope of immigrants for a bright future in the New World.⁵²⁰ As Lillian traverses through North America, she also comes across many disappointments in finding out that Jozéf has already moved on from each location. To will herself onwards and to remind herself of her goal, she continually repeats a phrase: “I will find him” (Ex. 49, mm. 88-95).⁵²¹ From mm. 96-104, the music transitions into a darker mood and the melodic line

⁵¹⁸ Estacio, Interview with author. Quoted from “*Lillian Alling: This Land Is Large*,” Vancouver Opera’s *Lillian Alling* Blog. For an example of the telegraph operator music, refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 145-156 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 80-140).

⁵¹⁹ The phrase “thousands and thousands and thousand” occurs in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 25 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 203-206), and 333 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 294-297).

⁵²⁰ For an example of this musical theme, refer to the accompaniment in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 29 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 1-6), and 62 (Act 1, Scene 3 Transition: mm. 103-108).

⁵²¹ The theme, “I Will Find Him,” occurs frequently throughout the opera. Refer to Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, 33 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 28-35), 39-40 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 73-81), 61-62 (Act 2, Scene 3: mm. 91-95), and 193 (Act 1, Scene 9: mm. 92-93).

gradually descends with a *diminuendo* to portray how “everything changes.” In m. 86, “Jozéf Nikitich” should be pronounced: [joˈzɛf niˈkɪtɨtʃ]⁵²²

In mm. 104-105, the accompaniment features a variation of “Petya’s Theme” (Ex. 50). It appears throughout the opera when Lillian recalls on the past, and here, it creates an ominous atmosphere. (Refer to Ex. 54 for the full “Petya Theme.”) Singers may sing the Recitative (mm. 104-109) with some freedom in order to clearly deliver the text. However, the overall rhythm should stay in tact in order to fit in with the underlying accompaniment.⁵²³ With the phrase, “One moment and the world can lose its mind ... the world can change forever,” Lillian references how quickly her life changed when Jozéf betrayed her family. The phrase also appears in her other aria, “This Is the Truth” (mm. 172-175). When Lillian is finally at peace, the phrase reflects her emotional change in Irene’s words: “The world has found its heart at last, the world will find its mind.”⁵²⁴

A cut has been added between mm. 109 and 110 of the adaptation in order to avoid a long interlude. It omits dramatic action in which Lillian’s memories come to life on stage and she sees the chorus of soldiers surrounding her mother and brother as described in the following stage directions:

[Lillian] stares into the darkness, where Shadowy Figures [soldier chorus] from her past appear, in Old World clothes. [...] A Young Boy [Petya] is playing with a wooden top, a “perpetual motion” like the one seen previously. [...] A Woman [Lillian’s mother] appears and gestures for him to put the toy away. [...] Suddenly, the Woman turns and stares in another direction where a bevy of dark figures, Soldiers in military uniform, appear. [...] The Woman trembles; she stares across the fire at Lillian.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, “Pronunciation Key of Russian, Greek, Brooklyn Accent and Norwegian in IPA.”

⁵²³ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵²⁴ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 335 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 312-316).

⁵²⁵ Refer to the stage directions in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 85-87, (Act 1, Scene 5).

This dramatic action foreshadows what Lillian later explains in her aria, “This Is the Truth” (see Section 5.6.2).

The cut works effectively if performers *crescendo* and build the intensity of the recitative sections’ final measures (mm. 108-109). Pianists should then come in as notated with no additional pause and with heavy, *fortissimo* chords to portray the fearsome marching of the soldiers as they head towards Lillian’s mother (Ex. 51).

Because the piano cannot create as full or as sustained of a sound as an orchestra can, singers and pianists may find it helpful to significantly speed up the tempo at the *con moto* in Section D (m. 114) to ♩ = 120-130 – basically doubling it (♩ = ♪, ♪ = 66). This faster tempo gives the music a greater sense of fear and panic.⁵²⁶ In addition, it helps singers get through the extremely high tessitura of the phrases in mm. 114-121. Singers should set the faster tempo with their pick up in m. 114 and modify the [i] vowels on the high notes towards [I], such as in the words “scream” and “she” to avoid an overly bright tone. Singers should also begin the *ritardando* in m. 120 by emphasizing each note of the triplet, then pianists may continue the slow down in m. 121 with a large *crescendo*. Rather than return to the previous tempo in mm. 122-125, the tempo ♩ = 90-95 provides a good balance for singers as it gives them time to breathe and set up the high notes, but not so much time that the high notes become strained. In addition, singers may find it helpful to cut the A5 note in m. 123 to two beats and use a rest in the third beat to breathe and set up the B5 note as shown in Ex. 52. Singers may choose to take only the first breath or both breaths as marked in this example and pianists should ensure to allow time for these breaths. In the interlude

⁵²⁶ Estacio, Interview with author.

that follows, pianists should *crescendo* and *accelerando* in m. 125 then *ritardando* and climax with a large chord at m. 126.

Another cut has been added to the adaptation between mm. 126-127 to maintain the momentum and continuity of the aria.⁵²⁷ It omits the following dramatic action indicated in the stage directions: “[Lillian’s] cry is answered by the strange, startled cry of a night bird. She turns in its direction and, when she turns back around, the Shadowy Figures have vanished.”⁵²⁸ An added caesura aids the transition through the cut for it allows singers to change emotion from extreme fear to fierce determination as Lillian’s nightmares fade away and her mind returns to reality.

In the Coda (mm. 127-133), Lillian’s theme of determination, “I Will Find You,” returns with another closely associated motive heard throughout the opera, “My Life Is Bound to your Life” (Ex. 53).⁵²⁹ Singers should sing these phrases very quietly yet with great “intensity” as indicated in the tempo marking. If sung within the context of the opera, singers should not express any anger as that would give away the ending of the opera.⁵³⁰ However, in the context of a stand-alone aria, singers may choose to enhance the dramatic effect of this ending and add a hint of malice to show that all is not what it seems.⁵³¹ With this interpretation, singers should emphasize beginning consonants and add breaths or lifts to punctuate the final phrase as in Ex. 53 in order to make it sound as threatening as possible. The postlude evokes the ominous cry of the night birds and alludes to the scene’s feeling of unrest and mystery (mm. 131-132).

⁵²⁷ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵²⁸ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 88, (Act 1, Scene 5: m. 173)

⁵²⁹ The motive “My Life Is Bound to your Life” occurs in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 33 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 36-40), 62 (Act 1, Scene 3: mm. 95-97), 259 (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 17-19).

⁵³⁰ Estacio, Interview with author.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

Ex. 42 Birdcalls, mm. 6-9.⁵³²

Ex. 43 “This Land Is Large” theme, mm. 4-6.

⁵³² The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “This Land Is Large” adaptation.

Ex. 44 Walking melody and shimmering sunlight, mm. 19-22.

Walking Melody

Shimmering Sunlight

mp

Ex. 45 Off-beat walking accompaniment, mm. 37-39.

$\text{♩} \rightarrow \text{♩} (\text{♩}=72)$

I walk

mp

Ex. 46 "This Land Is Large" theme echoed in the accompaniment, mm. 59-63.

a tempo

The land is large by day or night, a

a tempo

mp

ff

Ex. 47 "Quick bursts" of the telegraph, mm. 72-75.

Musical score for Ex. 47, "Quick bursts" of the telegraph, mm. 72-75. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand has a melodic line with several eighth-note bursts, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. Two specific eighth-note bursts in the right hand are highlighted with rectangular boxes.

Ex. 48 Musical theme, mm. 84-85.

Musical score for Ex. 48, Musical theme, mm. 84-85. The score is in 5/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The left hand provides a steady bass line with some chordal accompaniment.

Ex. 49 "I Will Find Him" theme, mm. 88-92.

Musical score for Ex. 49, "I Will Find Him" theme, mm. 88-92. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand has a melodic line with lyrics: "I will find him, no matter how hard the journey,". The left hand provides a steady bass line with a dynamic marking of *f*. There are three triplets in the right hand.

Ex. 50 "Petya's Theme," mm. 104-106.

Musical score for Ex. 50, "Petya's Theme," mm. 104-106. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The left hand provides a steady bass line with some chordal accompaniment. The score includes a key signature change and a time signature change from 4/4 to 6/4.

Ex. 51 Soldiers marching, mm. 110-114.

Quasi marziale, pesante ♩=66

ff *ffp*

Ex. 52 Suggested breaths, mm. 122-125.

Help her, Jo - zéf, help her, Jo - zéf!

ff

Ex. 53 "My Life Is Bound to your Life" motive with suggested breaths, mm. 129-131.

how. My life is bound to your life.

colla voce *mp*

5.5.3 Adaptation Notes

As previously mentioned, the objective of this anthology is to present singers with arias suitable for the purposes of auditions or performances. Therefore, the following cuts to the vocal score have been made to avoid long interludes and to maintain the overall flow of the piece: mm. 128-153, 156-157, and 173-177.⁵³³ In the adaptation, all the chorus parts have also been omitted (mm. 1-4 and 110) and a caesura has been added in m. 126.

5.6 “This Is the Truth!”

5.6.1 Aria Description

Range: D#4-B5

Setting: (Act 2, Scene 12) Scotty and Lillian enjoy a picnic together on a bright yet chilly Sunday in Stanley Park.⁵³⁴ Sea gulls and buoy bells can be heard in the distance.⁵³⁵ Scotty asks Lillian why she continues to pursue Jozéf even though he does not seem to return her love. In his frustration, Scotty reveals how much he cares for her and this convinces Lillian to finally tell him the truth. She wants him to understand that it is not love that motivates her, but hatred. The following lines lead up to the aria:

Lillian: This land is large and wild and fine. Such freedom I never knew before. Here, you can always ask for more. But I am bound to a promise I made long ago and far away. Until that promise is kept, nothing, nothing must stand in my way.

Scotty: You promised Jozéf to be his wife.

Lillian: More than that. My life is bound to his life.

Scotty: He left you in the lurch twice before.

Lillian: Maybe he thought I would stay in Russia. Maybe he forgot about me.

Scotty: That couldn't be true. Not you.

Lillian: You are a good man, Scotty, but you do not understand.

⁵³³ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, 75-89 (Act 1, Scene 5: “This Land Is Large” aria).

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 258 (Act 2, Scene 12, stage notes).

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, sound effect notes.

Scotty: I understand that you owe him nothing! Your life is not bound to his life. If he wanted you for his wife, he would have waited in Brooklyn, he would have waited in Dakota, he would have waited in Russia till both of you could leave! Look at me, Lillian, do you really believe he's waiting in Telegraph Creek? For him, life's a game of hide-and-go-seek! How many more continents will you chase him across? Never mind. Go on and find your Jozéf! Why should I care? It's your loss! ... No ... it's my loss.⁵³⁶

Once Lillian reveals her true intentions, Scotty promises to help her find Jozéf: "together, from now on, as one!"⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, 258-262 (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 1-47).

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 284 (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 247-249).

Aria 6: "This Is the Truth"⁵³⁸

Music: John Estacio
Libretto: John Murrell

$\text{♩} = 64$

You do not un-der-stand. You_ would be the first one_ I have

(Then tell me!)

colla voce

(She stares past Scotty, where her brother Petya appears, playing with the "perpetual motion.")

told. No. I am

(You're shaking!) (Are you cold?)

p

not that kind of cold. My life is bound to Jo - zéf's life. But

mp

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⁵³⁸ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 263-282 (Act 2, Scene 12).

14

not as a wo-man, not as his wife. I tell peo-ple that so

colla voce

17

they will help me. I am not seek-ing a fu-ture,

20

(Petya vanishes. Lillian turns to Scotty)

I am seek ing the past. Boh-zeh moy...

p

23

I can tell some-bo-dy else_ at last! This_ is the truth!

pp

26 **Andante** (♩ = c. 66)

with a sense of optimism

Jo -

28

zéf was a friend to my fam - i - ly, he

29

tells us he is go - ing to the New World to work with his

30

bro-ther in Brook-lyn We give him mon-ey to help us get pa-pers, the

32

nec - es - sar - y pa - per lies so we can make a new life ov - er

34

here. My

mp

Poco meno mosso, quasi rhapsodic

35

fam i - ly near - ly has been run - ning from ha - tred, from fear for near - ly

fp

37 *rit.*

all our lives.

rit. 8va *3* *3* *loco*

39 **Poco più mosso**

Then... at last... the day to cross the bord-er ar - rives..._____

p

41

Jo - zéf is there with our pa - pers.

p

43

Eve-ry-thing per-fect in ord-er. He will go with us as far as the

mf *p*

45

bord-er. Jo - zéf... has a smile that makes all of us

mp

48

smile. We go on smil-ing as we start down the road,

p

50

each of us car-ry-ing one lit-tle pack. The past is be hind. We

53

do not we do not look back.

mp

55

56

We have not gone far when he signs us to stop. We do not ask why.

58

My bro-ther has his top, a "per - pet-u al mo-tion" we called it. My

60

mo-ther scolds him: "You must leave that be-hind!"

62

Fear can make us fools, fear can make us

64 *poco accel.*

blind...

mp

poco accel.

65 **Poco più mosso** ♩ = 72

Sud - den - ly we are sur - round - ed by sold - iers.

fp

mf

66

Jo - zéf_ smiles_ at them_ They_ are his friends.

fp

fp

68

They give him mon-ey too. My fa-ther pulls us close.

fp *f* *fp*

70

My mother starts to cry.

f *fp*

71

My little brother and I

f *fp*

72

think it must be a game. But then, I see that

fp *mf*

74

Jo-zéf's smile has changed. It is a game...

fp *f*

76

Con moto ♩=74

one that Jo-zéf ar - ranged!

fp *f*

78

79

He _____ and the sol - diers

80

can - not stop laugh - ing. _____

82

They have played this game

83

man - y times be - fore!

85

My pa - rents are part - ed...

87

(Lillian's mother appears and reaches out to her, terrified.)

My bro - ther and I...

Poco meno mosso

90

rit. I see my moth-er try_ to cry.

f *p*

93

I see her try to scream... but she can-not re-mem-ber

(Lillian's father appears from another direction, staring at her, terrified.
A moment later, Petya reappears, holding on tightly to the top, staring at Lillian.)

96

how! *poco rit.* I see her, *a tempo*

ff *pp*

100

Scot - ty, I see my fa - ther... I see my

102

bro - ther... I see they are a -

104

fraid... I see them... I see them now!

(Scotty moves to her and holds her. At the same time, Jozéf, appears from within a looming group of soldiers and moves quite near to Lillian, smiling at her. Scotty sees only Lillian)

108

This is the truth. My life is bound to

112

his life. When I find him I will

(What will you do if you find him?)

115

tell him what hap-pened to us! My fa-ther

118

froze to death in the snow on his way to the

120

*(Her father retreats and vanishes.
She moves toward her mother.)*

la - bour camp. My mo-ther washed the

122

*(Her mother retreats and vanishes.
Lillian turns toward Petya.)*

dead in a cho-ler a ward, un til she be - came one of them.

125

My bro-ther went to live with one of the sol-diers... but

p

(Petya vanishes. Lillian turns back to Jozéf, who walks slowly past her, smiling, then vanishes with the solidiers.)

128

he is not liv-ing an-y-more.

mp *mf*

accel.

Poco più mosso ♩ = 72

132

I be-came the sold-ier's ser-vant...

sfp *mf*

134

I be-came their slave. They paid me no - thing so

mf

136

I could not save to buy my free - dom. In - stead I

fp *f*

138

Con moto ♩ = 74

saved my ha-tred!_

sf *f*

141

I saved it up in my heart, in my

142

mind, I saved it up un - til I could

143

find the mo-ment, one mo-ment to

145

run a - way.

147

I ran to Po - land, I worked night and

148

day in a fil - thy ho - tel near the port,

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149

a ho - tel where eve - ry sort of

cri - mi - nal felt free to

150

plot his es - cape, in - clu - ding me.

151

plot his es - cape, in - clu - ding me.

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153

I — saved my ha - tred — till I had e-nough mon - ey —

155

— to buy more pa - pers to sail — to the New World where

157

Jo - zéf — had gone.

159

My ha-tred has nev-er failed me... it drives me

p

161

on, it drives me

162

on, it drives me

163

on!

ff

165

Till he an - swers to me,

p *mf*

166

I can nev - er be free, can

p *mf*

167

nev - er be at peace, can

mp

\flat \bar{p} (b) \bar{p}

168

nev - er be in love, ___

\flat \bar{p} (b) \bar{p} \flat \bar{p} \sharp \bar{p}

170

Moderato ♩ = 64

I can-not ev-en be kind! This ___ is what hap - pens

rall. *rall.* *f* *mf*

\flat \bar{p} \flat \bar{p} \flat \bar{p}

173

when the world has lost its mind! When the world is changed for-

175 *(She sits and weeps. Scotty moves close to her.)*

ev - er...

mp

177

I will find him!

(Is it really the past you need to find? Could you not find a future instead?)

180 (Then I will go too)

p

The musical score consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef, with a brace on the left. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). Measure 180: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb3 and Eb4; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and Eb3. Measure 181: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb3 and Eb4; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and Eb3. Measure 182: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb3 and Eb4; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and Eb3. The piece ends with a double bar line.

5.6.2 Performance and Interpretative Notes

Approximately nine minutes in duration, this aria may be too lengthy for audition purposes yet it would suit a recital or performance setting due to its dramatic character.

In this aria, Lillian finally reveals the truth about her past. The aria's large-scale form follows the dramatic structure of her story with an Introduction (mm. 1-25), Parts 1-4, and a Coda (mm. 172-181). In Part 1 (mm. 26-55), Lillian's family dreams of a hopeful future, in Part 2 (mm. 64-108) Jozéf betrays them to the soldiers, in Part 3 (mm. 117-132) her family perishes, and in Part 4 (mm. 132-171) Lillian explains how she survived and what she plans to do when she finds Jozéf. Musical material and tempo changes delineate further divisions within each part as well as transitions between the parts.

In mm. 1-3 of the Introduction, singers may take time in the recitative as indicated by the *colla voce* marking. From mm. 3-15, the tempo should remain steady at $\text{♩} = 65$.⁵³⁹ In mm. 4-7, the accompaniment features "Petya's Theme" (Ex. 54) as Lillian's thoughts turn to the past and the stage directions note how "she stares past Scotty, where the same Young Boy from her past (her brother Petya) appears, playing with the 'perpetual motion.'"⁵⁴⁰ As the only personal memento Lillian kept over the years, the top's "perpetual motion" seems to symbolize her determination to continue forward and spin along with the world despite her suffering. Again from m. 16, singers may take time as indicated by the *colla voce* then return to tempo at m. 22. They should also sing the phrase, "this is the truth" (m. 25)

⁵³⁹ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 258 (Act 2, Scene 12).

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 263.

emphatically and with decisiveness. “Bohzheh moy” is pronounced [ˈbɔʒɛ mɔj] and means “oh my god!” in Russian.⁵⁴¹

Performers should add a slight break so as to transition from the solemn Introduction into the pleasant mood of Part 1 as Lillian begins her story “with a sense of optimism” (indicated in the score at m. 26). The accompaniment features a brief snippet of “Petya’s Theme” as Lillian’s thoughts turn back in time to when her family dreamed of a bright future in the New World (mm. 26-27 and 30). Part 1 divides into three parts: 1A (mm. 26-34), 1B (mm. 34-38), and 1A’ (mm. 39-55) in which the thematic A material features a cheerful atmosphere, frequent repeated notes, and a stepwise melodic movement (Ex. 55 and 56). Although pianists cannot play the violin harmonics in addition to the main orchestral lines in mm. 31-34, the dissonant harmonics create an eerie and disquieting effect. As previously mentioned, Estacio and Murrell allude to Lillian’s family being of Jewish descent and at the *poco meno mosso, quasi rhapsodic* marking in Section B (mm. 34-38), the music suddenly grows darker and more passionate as Lillian remarks how her family had to continually run from persecution.

In Section 1A’ (mm. 39-55), the previous tempo (*poco più mosso*) and light-hearted mood return as Lillian continues on with her story. In mm. 40-41, the accompaniment plays a brief motive from “Lillian’s Theme,” a little song that she sang to give herself courage and motivation: “I open my eyes, I pick up my pack, I pick out a path, I never look back.”⁵⁴² The ending phrase of this theme appears with varied words in mm. 52-54, “we do not, we do

⁵⁴¹ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, “Pronunciation Key of Russian, Greek, Brooklyn Accent and Norwegian in IPA.”

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 17-18 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 146-150). Irene also quotes and describes Lillian’s song on 100 (Act 1, Scene 6: mm. 19-23) and 341 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 348-352).

not look back” (Ex. 57), and also reappears as an important motive throughout the opera.⁵⁴³

A quasi-recitative (mm. 56-64) based loosely on the Section 1A’s stepwise melodic material serves as a transition to Part 2. Again, when Lillian references the top (mm. 58-59), the accompaniment plays small motives from “Petya’s Theme” (Ex. 58). Singers should perform the recitative strictly in tempo with careful attention to Estacio’s rhythms that bring out the natural inflection of the text. In mm. 60-61, Lillian describes how her mother scolded her brother to leave the top behind. This references the stage action that took place during the cut interlude of the aria, “This Land Is Large.”⁵⁴⁴ At m. 61, the music becomes more lyrical and passionate as Lillian reflects on her past. Singers should mix some chest voice into the F4 pitches of mm. 63-64 to colour the words, “Fear can make us blind,” with regret and bitterness.

In Part 2 (mm. 64-108), Lillian describes Jozéf’s betrayal and the musical material divides into four sections: 2A (mm. 64-76), 2B (mm. 77-91), 2C (mm. 91-98), and 2C’ (mm. 99-108). To evoke the sudden encroachment of the soldiers, pianists should *crescendo* and *accelerando* the ascending phrase leading into Section 2 and land with a heavily accented *fortepiano* chord on the downbeat of m. 65. Singers should breathe early in order to prepare for the quick entrance and use the phrase, “Suddenly we are surrounded by the soldiers” to establish the new *poco più mosso* tempo ($\text{♩} = 72$). As in mm. 64-65 and throughout the aria, Estacio frequently writes phrases that gradually build in intensity,

⁵⁴³ The “I Never, Never Look Back” motive occurs with slightly varied words in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 18 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 152-154), 47 (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 148-151), 143 (Act 1, Scene 8: mm. 45-48), 191-192 (Act 1, scene 9: mm. 82-84), 259 (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 13-14), and 342 (Act 2, Scene 14: mm. 354-357).

⁵⁴⁴ Refer Section 5.5.2 and the stage directions in Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 85-87 (Act 1, Scene 5: mm. 127-160).

climax in the following accompanimental interlude, and dissipate suddenly at the beginning of the next phrase. These phrases create a “wave-like” effect of emotional and musical intensity to depict Lillian’s surging fear and panic (Ex. 59).

In Section 2A, Lillian describes how bewildered she felt and how she slowly came to realize Jozéf’s betrayal. Singers should view Section 2A as a quasi-accompanied recitative in which they should focus on bringing out the natural rhythm of the text while also ensuring that the tempo remains steady enough to fit in with the accompaniment. Coordination between the voice part and the piano may seem especially challenging in mm. 69-71 where the piano leads into the vocal phrases and singers must join in with a pick up to beat two (Ex. 60). The high tessitura of this section may also create some difficulty for singers. They should keep in mind to prepare in advance for the high notes by lifting the soft palate as they inhale, singing through the vowels, and not tightening on the ends of words or on ending [I] vowels (as in the diphthongs of “they” [ðei] or “cry” [krai]) (Ex. 61).

At the *con moto* ($\text{♩} = 74$) in Part 2B (mm. 77-91), the quick repeated notes and hammered chords of the militaristic accompaniment depict the soldiers as they advance on Lillian’s family. In the vocal score, the chorus of soldiers taunt them by singing “na, na” (mm. 77-84); however, these have been omitted from the adaptation. Singers should avoid taking a breath between mm. 79-80 and 82-83. The dynamic markings in the accompaniment serve as a reminder to pianists to not overpower the vocal part. Singers should sing at a dynamic in which they feel their voice can sufficiently carry over the percussive accompaniment. They should also *crescendo* the final notes of each phrase for their full duration to lead into the piano’s build up of the phrase. As the music becomes more lyrical at m. 85, singers may add a slight *allargando* and decrease the dynamic level to

mp to portray Lillian’s anguish at seeing her parents being taken away. Singers should also build and accelerate mm. 87-88 so that the phrase sounds as if Lillian, being so emotionally overwhelmed by the image of her mother “reach[ing] out to her, terrified,” cuts off her words midsentence.⁵⁴⁵ In the following interlude, the accompaniment musically finishes Lillian’s sentence with a beautiful melodic phrase that should speed up in m. 88 and slow down in m. 90.

Part 2C begins with a sudden change in dynamic from *forte* to *piano* and a slight relaxation in tempo (*poco meno mosso*) to reflect a feeling of tenderness as Lillian sees her mother’s tears. Singers should sing the following phrase (mm. 93-97), “I see her try to scream ... but she cannot remember how!” with a feeling of helplessness and fear. Again, the accompaniment takes over the melodic line in the following interlude, which should slightly broaden and grow to a *fortissimo* dynamic at m. 98 then suddenly dissipate to *pianissimo* in m. 99 (Ex. 62).

Part 2C’ (mm. 99-108) should return to the previous tempo ($\text{♩} = 72$). The following phrases (mm. 102-108) may gradually slow down to $\text{♩} = c. 60-65$ to depict Lillian as she shifts out of her memories and returns to her present conversation with Scotty.⁵⁴⁶ Throughout the opera, Lillian presents herself as a strong, independent woman, yet here, singers should aim to reveal her vulnerability – a side of herself she rarely allows anyone to see. In mm. 109-112, Lillian restates the opening words of the aria, “This is the truth,” and sings another thematic motive, “My Life Is Bound to his Life” (Ex. 63). The aria seems as if it could end at this point; however, the adaptation continues to include the climactic ending in Part 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Refer to stage notes at m. 88 in the author’s “This Is the Truth” adaptation.

⁵⁴⁶ Estacio, Interview with author.

In mm. 113-116, the music transitions into Part 3 in which Scotty, whose vocal lines have been omitted from this adaptation, asks Lillian: “What will you do if you find him?” Performers may add a *più mosso* beginning with the piano’s two eighth-note pick-up in m. 113. In the absence of Scotty, singers need to transition quickly from sad solemnity to an agitated persistence in m. 114. Pianists should gradually play louder in m. 116 and suddenly soften in the following bar as Lillian begins to explain what became of her family after the soldiers separated them. To aid in this quick transition, pianists may add a slight lift between mm. 116 and 117 to give singers more time to change thought.

In Part 3 (mm. 117-132), Lillian describes what happened to each member of her family one by one. As she does so, she becomes increasingly agitated and singers may reflect this by increasing the tempo of each section as follows: mm. 117-120 ($\text{♩} = 60-65$), mm. 121-124 ($\text{♩} = 65-70$), and mm. 125-129 ($\text{♩} = 70-72$). As in similar “wave-like” phrases discussed earlier, pianists should gradual increase the volume of the ascending passages leading into the vocal phrase then suddenly go quiet on the downbeat of the next bar (Ex. 64). These waves of intensity help maintain the momentum, especially since the vocal line remains more sustained. The static nature and repeated notes of Lillian’s lines depict her trance-like state as she revisits her worst memories (Ex. 65). During these phrases, pianists should bring out the accompaniment’s countermelody that hauntingly features “Petya’s Theme” (Ex. 65). Within Part 3, the vocal line gradually ascends to climax in mm. 128-129. Singers may opt to perform Estacio’s alternative notes, which create a more linear ascent.⁵⁴⁷ (Refer to Section 5.6.3). In particular, the tessitura in Part 3 lies quite high in the voice and singers may find that by lowering the notes in this section, they can more easily

⁵⁴⁷ Estacio, Interview with author.

execute the final and most dramatic section of the aria (Part 4). In addition, singers should pay extra attention to their intonation in m. 126 as the voice part's repeated D5 pitch lies in close dissonance with the many E's in the accompaniment. When pianists take over the melody in mm. 129-132, they should gradually accelerate into the final part of the aria. Singers should also ensure to breathe earlier in anticipation of this quick entrance.

Depending on the weight of their voice, singers may perform Part 4 (mm. 132-171) somewhere between $\text{♩} = 72-80$.⁵⁴⁸ In Part 4, Lillian describes how she survived the soldiers' brutality and how her hatred motivates her need to find Jozéf. Based on musical material, Part 4 divides into five sections: 4A (mm. 132-138), 4A' (mm. 138-146), 4A'' (mm. 146-152), 4B (mm. 152-164), and 4C (mm. 165-171). Within each of these sections, the phrases gradually ascend and build in volume. Each section also finishes with a musical "wave" in which the accompaniment takes over the melody, ascends with a *crescendo*, climaxes, then quickly dissipates at the beginning of the next section (Ex. 66). Here, these waves convey Lillian's pent up anger brimming over, while the sudden decrease in volume portrays her attempt to regain control over her emotions. Throughout Part 4, pianists should adhere to Estacio's dynamic markings that point out when pianists can afford to play out and when they should soften so as not cover the vocal part. However, pianists should remain cautious not play too quietly as the piece may lose its dramatic effect and singers will feel unsupported.

Featuring mostly repeated notes built around a stepwise ascending melody, the A material in Part 4 seems reminiscent of the A material in Part 1 (Ex. 65). However, it has an entirely different affect and instead of a cheerful mood, it depicts Lillian's seething anger.

⁵⁴⁸ Estacio, Interview with author.

The A material repeats three times with slight variation in Part 4. However, the overall shape of each A section remains the same, gradually ascending and growing in dynamics and intensity. Almost all the phrases begin on the same pitch (A4), except in Section 4A” where they begin on a tone higher (B4). Singers should concentrate on giving these lower notes a forward focus so that they can be heard above the busy accompaniment and so that the following notes in the phrase also maintain a forward positioning. Singers should also hold the final note of each phrase for the full duration to create a long sense of line and momentum. In addition, singers should emphasize beginning and ending consonants so that words are clearly understood, such as the [s] in “saved,” [h] in “hatred,” and [f] in “freedom.” Sections 4A and 4A” both end with an unaccompanied phrase within which singers may take rhythmic freedom to clearly enunciate and emphasize the words (Ex. 67 and 68). They may also mix some chest voice in the E4 pitch for the word “hatred” (m. 138) and add a lift before, “including me” (Ex. 78, m. 151).

The music takes on a more lyrical quality in Part 4B (mm. 152-164) as Lillian explains how after learning to embrace her hatred, she finally saved enough money to seek out Jozéf in the New World. Throughout this section, singers should ensure to keep the soft palate lifted and to not let it drop as the phrases descend for this will only increase the effort needed to lift it again for the next high note. Cutting off the eighth-note ties in m. 161-162 may also help singers for it allows them more time to breathe (Ex. 69). In addition, singers should pace Part 4B dynamically by following the contour of their vocal line rather than the accompaniment’s marked dynamics. The highest note of the aria, the B5 in m. 163 should serve as the musical and emotional climax of the piece. It represents the emotional

release of Lillian's anger after which the accompaniment's flashy interlude descends with a *decrescendo* into Section C.

In Section C (mm. 165-171), Lillian emphatically states her resolve to find Jozéf while the pitches ascend and the dynamics increase to reflect her growing anger. She realizes that until she finds him she cannot find happiness or return Scotty's love as she says: "Till [Jozéf] answers to me, I can never be free, never be at peace, can never be in love, I cannot even be kind!"⁵⁴⁹

Pianists should gradually slow down into the Coda (mm. 172-181) in which singers may take rhythmic liberties for expressive purposes. Here, Lillian echoes a poignant phrase from her previous aria, "This Land Is Large": "This is what happens when the world has lost its mind! When the world is changed forever."⁵⁵⁰ She becomes overcome with grief and "sits and weeps." Scotty moves closer to comfort her and asks: "Is it really the past you need to find? Could you not find a future instead?"⁵⁵¹ She refuses to listen and resolutely declares, "I will find him!" (m. 179). Singers may take time in this phrase to depict the finality of Lillian's decision as well as her fierce determination. During the postlude, Scotty replies, "Then I will go too."⁵⁵² In the opera, the aria continues directly into a duet between Lillian and Scotty in which he convinces her that from now on, they will search for Jozéf together as a couple. The ending of this adaptation has been modified and a tonic chord added to m. 181 to create a more final sounding conclusion.

⁵⁴⁹ Refer to the author's "This Is the Truth" adaptation, mm. 165-171.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, mm. 172-175.

⁵⁵¹ Estacio and Murrell, *Lillian Alling*, vocal score, 282 (Act 2, Scene 12: mm. 224-226).

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, mm. 227-228.

Ex. 54 "Petya's Theme," mm. 4-7.⁵⁵³

Ex. 55 Part 1A melodic material, mm. 28-30.

Ex. 56 Part 1A' melodic material, 49-50.

⁵⁵³ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author's "This Is the Truth" adaptation.

Ex. 57 "We do not, we do not look back," mm. 52-54.

past is behind... We do not we do not look back.

Ex. 58 Motives from "Petya's Theme," mm. 58-59.

My brother has his top, a "per - pet u-al mo-tion" we called it. My

Ex. 59 Wave of emotional and musical intensity, mm. 64-65.

blind... Suddenly we are surrounded by soldiers.

Ex. 60 Challenging entrances for singers, mm. 69-70.

My fa-ther pulls us close. My mo-ther starts to cry.

Ex. 61 Passage with diphthongs, mm. 67-68.

They are his friends. They give him mon-ey too.

Ex. 62 "Wave," mm. 96-99.

Wave

Ex. 63 "This is the truth. My life is bound to his life," mm. 109-112.

This is the truth. My life is bound to his life.

Ex. 64 "Wave," mm. 120-121.

la - bour camp. My mo-ther washed the

Ex. 65 Sustained vocal line and "Petya Theme" as countermelody, mm. 121-124.

My mo-ther washed the dead in a cho-ler-a ward, un-til she be - came one of them.

Ex. 66 "Wave" and Part 4A melodic material, mm. 139-143.

Con moto ♩ = 74

I saved it up in my heart, in my
mind, I saved it up un - til I could find

Ex. 67 Unaccompanied phrase, mm. 137-138.

free - dom. In - stead I saved my ha - tred!

Ex. 68 Suggested lift, mm. 151-152.

plot his es - cape, in - clu - ding me.

Ex. 69 Breath suggestions, mm. 159-163.

My ha - tred has nev - er failed me... it drives me on, it drives me on, it drives me on!

5.6.3 Adaptation Notes

The chorus lines in mm. 77-84 and 117-130 and the piano reduction's *ossia* line in mm. 140 and 163-164 have been omitted in the adaptation. Because the orchestral lines take greater precedence within the context of the aria and because the pianist cannot play both parts, Scotty's lines have also been omitted. However, his lyrics have been kept in parenthesis in mm. 1, 5-7, 113, 177-179, and 180-181. The final chord in m. 181 has been added to give the adaptation a firmer ending.

During the premier production, Estacio wrote some lower notes for the vocal part that singers with heavier voices may choose to sing if they find the tessitura of the piece too high.⁵⁵⁴ These optional notes have been included in the adaptation as cue notes.

⁵⁵⁴ Estacio, Interview with author.

6. *STICKBOY*

6.1 Background

Inspired after having read Shane Koyczan's autobiographical verse novel, *Stickboy* (2008), James Wright, Vancouver Opera's general director, approached Koyczan to transform his anti-bullying story into an opera.⁵⁵⁵ As Wright puts it, "Essentially, it's a story about being the 'other' – the outsider – and that's a universal theme."⁵⁵⁶ The Province of British Columbia also saw potential in Vancouver Opera's *Stickboy* to promote anti-bullying and contributed \$500,000 to support their 2015/16 school tour productions.⁵⁵⁷ In 2013, Vancouver Opera commissioned Koyczan and composer, Jordan Nobles, to create *Stickboy*, the opera.⁵⁵⁸ Due to personal reasons, Nobles had to discontinue work on the piece so Vancouver Opera later appointed Neil Weisensel to take over. Presented as a small-scale production, this eighty-minute opera premiered at the Vancouver Playhouse on 23 October 2014 with a cast of thirteen singers and an eleven-piece orchestra. The well-received production appealed to new audiences by featuring a fusion of cinematography and opera through its use of Koyczan's pre-recorded narrations and a series of video animations that brought the protagonist's inner thoughts to life.

⁵⁵⁵ Andrew Findlay, "Real Life Opera," Vancouver Foundation, 27 October 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/whats-new/real-life-opera>.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Brian Morton, "B.C. Gives \$500,000 Grant to Anti-bullying Opera *Stickboy*," *The Vancouver Sun*, 28 February 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.vancouversun.com/entertainment/gives+grant+anti+bullying+opera+Stickboy/9564777/story.html>.

⁵⁵⁸ The following information regarding *Stickboy* has been gathered from Vancouver Opera News Releases: Selina Rajani, "Vancouver Opera Commissions Anti-bullying Opera From Award-Winning Spoken Word Poet Shane Koyczan," 13 August 2013, accessed 28 January 2016, <https://www.vancouveropera.ca/sites/default/files/VO-Commissions-Opera-from-Shane-Koyczan-FINAL.pdf>; Selina Rajani, "Vancouver Opera Announces New Composer for *Stickboy* Neil Weisensel," 9 January 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <https://www.vancouveropera.ca/sites/default/files/New-Composer-Announced-for-Stickboy-FINAL.pdf>; and Selina Rajani, "Innovative Murals and Provocative Posters Confront the Issue of Bullying, in Preparation for The World Premiere Production of *Stickboy*," 7 October 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <https://www.vancouveropera.ca/sites/default/files/StickboyRelease2Final.pdf>.

6.1.1 Librettist: Shane Koyczan

Born in Yellowknife and raised in Penticton, British Columbia, Shane Koyczan (b. 1976), a spoken word or “slam” poet, rose to fame with his performance of “We Are More” at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics Opening Ceremonies.⁵⁵⁹ “Slam” focuses on the performance of poetry and refers to an audience-judged competition where poets recite their original works.⁵⁶⁰ In 2000, Koyczan became the first Canadian to win the US National Individual Poetry Slam.⁵⁶¹ He has also published four books, including *Visiting Hours* (2005), which both *The Globe and Mail* and *The Guardian* (UK) have included on their lists for “Best Books of the Year.”⁵⁶² Known for his ability to approach difficult social issues such as bullying and death in a powerful way, Koyczan “takes simple metaphors and everyday occurrences, the uncomfortable, sad and funny, and draws out their complexities and their beauty.”⁵⁶³

In 2008, Koyczan wrote *Stickboy*, an autobiographical verse novel based on his experiences with bullying and in 2013, he collaborated with Vancouver-based cinematography company, Giant Ant, to create an animated YouTube video entitled, “To This Day.”⁵⁶⁴ This video also approached the topic of bullying and quickly went viral; it now

⁵⁵⁹ The following biographical material is gathered from Charlene Davis, “Shane L. Koyczan,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified 08 May 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/shane-l-koyczan>.

⁵⁶⁰ “A Brief Guide to Slam Poetry,” *Poets.org*, last modified 29 May 2004, accessed 28 January 2016, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/brief-guide-slam-poetry>.

⁵⁶¹ Davis, “Shane L. Koyczan.”

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ Shane Koyczan, “To This Day,” YouTube video, 7:37, posted by Shane Koyczan, 19 February 2013, accessed 4 March 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>.

has over twenty million views. Koyczan later adapted “To This Day” for an equally successful TEDtalk performance.⁵⁶⁵

To Koyczan, “Opera is the original marriage of words and music.”⁵⁶⁶ To create *Stickboy*’s libretto, he had to embrace the challenge of working in this unfamiliar genre and learn to “bend,” “twist,” and “manipulate” his words in order to make them sing-able.⁵⁶⁷ Ultimately, with *Stickboy*, Koyczan aimed to “create a piece that can connect with multiple generations.”⁵⁶⁸

6.1.2 Composer: Neil Weisensel

Specializing in opera, Winnipeg composer, Neil Weisensel (b. 1965) has written seven operas as well as works in other genres, such as film, stage, documentaries, and animations. His compositional style draws from a variety of sources, including “jazz, rock, ethno-cultural, and world beat.”⁵⁶⁹ For *Stickboy*, Weisensel synthesized styles and drew upon his experience working in various genres to appeal to new audiences, and most of all, to serve the drama onstage.⁵⁷⁰ As he mentions in a video interview with *The Globe and Mail*, “The fact that [*Stickboy*] was composed by one person makes it ok to be very stylistically variable. Ultimately, I will use whatever style is needed to appropriately portray whatever

⁵⁶⁵ Shane Koyczan, “To This Day...For the Bullied and the Beautiful,” video, 12:03, TED.com, last modified February 2013, accessed 28 January 2016, https://www.ted.com/talks/shane_koyczan_to_this_day_for_the_bullied_and_beautiful?language=en.

⁵⁶⁶ Francois Marchand, “Shane Koyczan to Pen Anti-Bullying Libretto for Vancouver Opera,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 13 August 2013, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.vancouversun.com/entertainment/Shane+Koyczan+anti+bullying+libretto+Vancouver+Opera/8784292/story.html>.

⁵⁶⁷ Janet Smith, “Vancouver Opera’s *Stickboy* Boldly Faces the Bullies Again,” *The Georgia Straight*, 8 October 2014, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.straight.com/arts/744691/vancouver-operas-stickboy-boldly-faces-bullies-again>.

⁵⁶⁸ Marchand, “Shane Koyczan to Pen Anti-Bullying Libretto for Vancouver Opera.”

⁵⁶⁹ Neil Weisensel, Neil Weisensel Website, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.neilmusic.com>.

⁵⁷⁰ “Bullying-Themed Opera *Stickboy* Opens in Vancouver,” *Globe and Mail Video*, video, 30 October 2016, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/arts-video/video-bullying-themed-opera-stickboy-opens-in-vancouver/article21378006>.

is happening on stage.”⁵⁷¹ For instance, Weisensel writes beautiful “Puccini-like melodies” in The Boy and Grandmother duets to portray their caring love for each other, and in the bullying scenes, he turns to taunting children’s songs and 1980’s musical styles contemporary to the opera’s setting.⁵⁷²

Because Weisensel joined the production late in the process, he had to compose the entire opera in only seven months. The animations and pre-recorded narrations had already been completed, giving him the additional challenge of having to write music to match the specific durations and characteristics of the animated sequences.⁵⁷³ Furthermore, he also had to create a sound design for the opera to include sound effects such as school bells and wind noises.⁵⁷⁴ As Weisensel points out, *Stickboy* is “almost a hybrid between an opera and a film because of the polystylism of the music and the generous use of the very expressive animations to help tell the story.”⁵⁷⁵

6.2 List of Lead Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Vancouver Opera production of *Stickboy* that premiered on 23 October 2014.⁵⁷⁶

Boy (Tenor)	Sunny Shams
Grandmother (Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano)	Meghan Latham

⁵⁷¹ “Bullying-Themed Opera *Stickboy* Opens in Vancouver,” Globe and Mail Video.

⁵⁷² For an example of children’s “taunting” music, refer to Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, n. p., 2014, copy obtained from the Vancouver Opera Association, 47-51 (Act 1, Scene 3: mm. 111-136). Staged as a videogame where The Boy tries to outmanoeuvre his bullies, the chorus music in Act 2, Scene 4 draws upon popular music styles from the 1980’s. For an example of the “videogame” music, refer to Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, 36-53 (Act 2, Scene 4: mm. 1-71).

⁵⁷³ Ben Wylie, “*Stickboy*: Interview with Neil Weisensel,” *CMC BC Magazine*, accessed 28 January 2016, <http://www.cmc magazine.com/stickyboy-interview-with-neil-weisensel>.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁶ The following cast list has been gathered from Rajani, “Innovative Murals and Provocative Posters Confront the Issue of Bullying.”

Old Man/Principal 1/Grandpa/Gym Teacher (Baritone)	Willy Miles-Grenzberg
Janitor/Chris/Jeff/Dick (Baritone)	Alan MacDonald
Secretary, Teacher, Principal 2 (Soprano)	Heather Pawsey
Valedictorian (Soprano)	Melanie Krueger

6.3 Opera Synopsis

Based on Koyczan’s own childhood experiences and his verse novel of the same title, *Stickboy* takes place in Yellowknife during the 1980’s.⁵⁷⁷ Being overweight and having been abandoned by his parents then raised by his grandparents, The Boy suffers relentless physical and emotional bullying from his peers and school authority figures. The title, *Stickboy*, alludes to the imagery of a bullying victim filled with dynamite sticks on the threshold of explosion. Unable to express his emotions to others, the opera’s animations and dialogue portray The Boy’s inner thoughts and the “monster” of suppressed rage growing within him. One day, The Boy can no longer contain this monster, and it comes raging out as he beats up his classmates. The Boy comes to realize that in his attempt of self-preservation, he has become the thing he hates most, the bully.

Act 1: In the playground, the bully, Chris, beats up the ten-year-old Boy as the other children watch in fascination. Only an Old Man, a war veteran, has the bravery to come to The Boy’s rescue and takes him home to his grandmother. She comforts him and tries to teach him to not withhold his emotions and to instead, “Let the feelings out and send them on their way.”⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ The following synopsis has been summarized from Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30, (Act 1, Scene 2: mm. 72-75).

After enduring yet another of Chris' beatings, The Boy heads to his locker where the word "fat-ass" has been spray-painted. As the Janitor scrubs it off, he tells The Boy that kids would probably stop bullying him if he just lost some weight. Later in class, the students make a ruckus tormenting The Boy. Instead of reprimanding his bullies, the teacher blames The Boy for provoking them. The principal then summons The Boy to his office and demands to know who defaced his locker. Fearing Chris' retaliation, The Boy refuses to give up his bully's name and gets sent to detention. There he finds himself sitting in front of Chris who repeatedly kicks his chair seat from behind. Unable to tolerate anymore, The Boy finally confronts Chris and asks him, "Why are you doing this to me?"⁵⁷⁹ Chris simply replies, "Because," and continues his kicking.⁵⁸⁰

When The Boy returns home, he runs angrily to his room and throws his furniture around in frustration. Instead of intruding on his privacy, The Grandmother slips a note under his door asking him if he is okay. They exchange notes and The Boy asks her to stay with him by the door.

Act 2: Three years have past and although Chris has moved away, new bullies have taken his place and continue to push The Boy around. The Boy's grandfather brings home a rifle and The Boy admires its power. He practices shooting it, imagining his bullies' faces in place of targets.

At school The Boy tries to escape a beating and accidentally hits his tormentor, Jeff, in the face. Later while waiting for the bus, Jeff gets his revenge by hitting The Boy hard in the ribs with his hockey stick. The next day in gym class, The Boy gives his teacher a note excusing him from class due to his injury. Instead of listening to him, the teacher forces him

⁵⁷⁹ Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, 77 (Act 1, Scene 5: mm. 22-23).

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

to take off his shirt to play basketball on the “skins” team. The Boy winces in pain as the class gawks at his bruises. The teacher finally excuses him, and The Boy makes his way to the side when one of the kids hits him in the face with a basketball.

As The Boy gets ready for school the next day, he tries to sneak his grandfather’s rifle with him. However, his Grandmother returns home having forgotten something and foils his plan. She comforts him and the boy finally breaks down and sobs.

Act 3: The Boy and his grandparents move to Penticton, British Columbia. The Boy has high hopes for a fresh start at his new school and the students and staff welcome him kindly. As soon as he feels things may finally have changed, the taunting sadly begins again. Unable to tolerate anymore, the monster within him finally comes raging out. He beats up his new classmates and the principle sends him home, telling his grandmother that her grandson initiated the fight. This creates a rift between The Boy and his grandmother.

No longer able to bridle the monster within him, The Boy takes his anger out at the other students at school. He secretly begins cutting himself to gain some sense of control. He repeats this behavior continuously for months until, one day, he cuts himself too deeply and cannot make his arm stop bleeding. He calls his grandmother for help and she rushes him to the hospital. They reconcile as she cries by his bedside.

At graduation, The Valedictorian delivers her speech while The Boy listens, reflecting upon The Old Man’s war stories. The Boy concludes that unlike The Valedictorian’s wonderful memories, his school experiences have been more like a war. At the end of the speech, the students leave in celebration, throwing their caps up in the air. A student returns for his fallen cap and The Boy picks it up to give to him. The student refuses

it, leaving The Boy all alone on stage with the hat still in his hand. His grandmother comes to join him with a hug and they leave together.

6.4 “One Day This Will All Pass”

Although premiered by mezzo-soprano, Megan Latham, the role of The Grandmother lies within the same tessitura as the other soprano roles in the opera. Weisensel did not write these parts with a specific voice type in mind, so both sopranos and mezzo-sopranos could sing any of the female roles in the opera.⁵⁸¹ The Grandmother’s aria allows singers to show beautiful lyric singing and dramatic, emotional characterization.

6.4.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of The Grandmother would suit dramatic or full lyric sopranos and lyric mezzo-sopranos.

Range: C4-A♭5

Character: The Grandmother, having raised The Boy, is one of the few sympathetic characters in the opera and in Koyczan’s childhood. Koyczan describes his grandmother as having “a tremendous amount of empathy” as she worked at a receiving home – an emergency shelter for children in need.⁵⁸² Throughout the opera, The Grandmother always tries to help The Boy express his feelings. For Koyczan, “It meant something that somebody

⁵⁸¹ Neil Weisensel, Interview with author, 21 March 2016.

⁵⁸² Shane Koyczan, Interview with author, 14 March 2016.

cared enough to put the time in, even in those moments.”⁵⁸³ The Grandmother should not be played as too old as she is only in her mid-forties at this point in the opera.⁵⁸⁴

Setting: (Act 2, Scene 7) After having endured three years of torment and being humiliated once again at school, The Boy has had enough. He decides to sneak his grandfather’s rifle to school in order to protect himself from his bullies. Unaware of his plans, The Grandmother wishes her grandson a good day and leaves for work in the morning. The Boy immediately tries to shove the rifle down his snow pant leg in order to conceal it while he walks to school. Having forgotten something, The Grandmother returns home and sees the boy with the rifle in his pants. Rather than yell at him or take the gun away, she comforts him, and The Boy finally breaks down and cries.

⁵⁸³ Smith, “Vancouver Opera’s *Stickboy* Boldly Faces the Bullies Again.”

⁵⁸⁴ Weisensel, Interview with author.

Aria 7: "One Day This Will All Pass"⁵⁸⁵

Music: Neil Weisensel
Libretto: Shane Koyczan

♩ = 45

I'm off to work my

7 *Freely*

darling boy. Try your best to have a better day to-day.

♩ = 96

10

f *ff*

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⁵⁸⁵ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, 70-82 (Act 2, Scene).

12 ♩ = 50

I for-got my...

17

We aren't going a-ny-where_ to - day. Not

23

work. Not school. To-day we stay_ right where we_ are.

29

To-day we are... "sick." To-day is a ho - li-day.

34

Just for _____ us. Just for _____ us.

39 $\text{♩} = 120$

One day _____ this will all _____

con pedale

44

pass and because of it, you will be strong in a way

simile

49

o - thers are not. _____ You will _____

53

be strong in a way o - thers are

57

not.

61

For now, you have to know that you can

legato

66

ne - ver hurt just one per - son, you can

dolce *loco*

71

ne - ver hurt just one per - son.

76

Who - e - ver they are,

81

some-one loves them. It's the same for
(Someone loves them?)

86

us They hurt me
(It's the same for us?)

91

when they hurt you. _____ They _____

(They hurt me.)

96

hurt me when they hurt you. _____

102

$\text{♩} = 64$

(Why do they do it?) They do it___ be-cause they don't want it done to

107

them. It's fear, it's fear, and fear is a-fraid of it-

114

self. — It frigh-tens ev'-ry-thing a-round it -

119

self to hide the fact that it too is scared. — Fear frigh-tens
(Fear is scared?)

124

ev'-ry-thing a-round it - self to hide the fact that fear too is scared.

129

a tempo $\text{♩} = 50$ *ff*
Sur - vi - val —
(How do I keep going?)

134

is-n't an in - stinct. It's an act of sheer will!

mf

140

Get up.

f *ff*

6.4.2 Performance and Interpretive Notes

With its dissonance against The Grandmother's comforting theme in E \flat major, the opening A6 pitch foreshadows that although everything seems routine, something is amiss (Ex. 70).⁵⁸⁶ When The Grandmother discovers her grandson with the gun, instead of reacting with shock or anger, she focuses only on finding a way to comfort him and her theme is heard again in the accompaniment, this time without any dissonance (mm. 14-18). The following excerpt from Koyczan's novel, *Stickboy*, describes this moment in further detail:

Her jaw didn't drop like a carnival ride [...]
She didn't fall to the floor as if it were the top of an altar [...]
She simply closed the door behind her,
sat down next to me,
unbuttoned her winter jacket,
and sighed one heavily labored breath –
as if this moment were a long pregnancy,
whose tremors of pain had finally begun,
and she had recognized the fact
that this was when the real work was about to start.⁵⁸⁷

To portray The Grandmother's loving concern for her grandson, Weisensel employs a melodic style akin to Puccini with beautiful arching phrases and soaring high notes (Ex. 71).⁵⁸⁸ He requests singers perform The Grandmother's lines with "as much warmth, reassurance, and love as possible in their sound."⁵⁸⁹ The vocal line contains many leaps and singers should sing them cleanly, without excessive *portamenti* (Ex. 72). They should also never feel the need to push because of the opera's light orchestration.

⁵⁸⁶ Weisensel, Interview with author.

⁵⁸⁷ Shane Koyczan, *Stickboy* (Vancouver: House of Parlance, 2008), 85.

⁵⁸⁸ Davis, "Shane L. Koyczan."

⁵⁸⁹ Weisensel, Interview with author.

Weisensel structures the aria as follows: Recitative (mm. 1-13), A (mm. 14-38), B (mm. 39-61), B' (mm. 62-104), A (mm. 105-130), and C (mm. 131-147). The opening phrases (mm. 5-9) should be sung freely in a recitative style.⁵⁹⁰ In the first A Section (mm. 14-38), singers can feel free to take expressive time except with the phrase, “We aren’t going anywhere to day” (mm. 19-21), which should stay more in tempo to create an impetus.⁵⁹¹ The return of the A Section at the end of the aria (mm. 105-130) should also stay more in tempo.⁵⁹²

In the more moving B Sections (mm. 39-61 and 62-104), singers should strive to sing through the long phrasing and follow the accompaniment’s forward momentum. The second B Section should feel even more *legato* than the first as The Grandmother tries to sooth her grandson. The composer has specified that the following phrases be sung in one breath to avoid disturbing the musical line: mm. 52-58 and 63-67 (Ex. 71 and 72). Singers may breathe in m. 68 before, “just one person.”⁵⁹³ The *dolce* marking in mm. 68-69 indicates a change in vocal colour so this phrase should be sung more *sotto voce* or introspectively.⁵⁹⁴ Singers should return to the previous colour at *loco* in m. 70 (Ex. 72).⁵⁹⁵ Leading into the return of the A Section, singers may opt to sing The Boy’s line as if asking themselves the question: “Why do they do it?” (mm. 102-103).

With her final lines of the aria in Section C, The Grandmother summarizes one of the most important and moving messages in the opera: “Survival isn’t an instinct. It’s an act of

⁵⁹⁰ Weisensel, Interview with author.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

sheer will” (mm. 131-140).⁵⁹⁶ Weisensel mentions how he took inspiration from Charles Ives’ song, “From The Swimmers” and its accompaniment, which mimics waves overtaking the singer.⁵⁹⁷ Weisensel incorporates this affect by requiring singers to sing “at their maximum” dynamic to overcome the *fortissimo* orchestration.⁵⁹⁸ As the accompaniment grows quieter at m. 138, the singer resurfaces and triumphs at “It’s an act of sheer will (Ex. 73).” The final, “Get up,” should be sung gently and with warmth as The Grandmother motivates her grandson to move onwards both physically and emotionally (m. 147).

Ex. 70 Dissonant A6 pitch against “The Grandmother’s Theme,” mm. 1-6.⁵⁹⁹

Ex. 71 Recommended phrasing with no breath, mm. 52-58.

You will be strong in a way o-thers are not.

⁵⁹⁶ Smith, “Vancouver Opera’s *Stickboy* Boldly Faces the Bullies Again.”

⁵⁹⁷ Refer to Charles Ives, “From The Swimmers,” *114 Songs by Charles Ives* (New York: Associated Music Pub., 1975). Weisensel, Interview with author.

⁵⁹⁸ Weisensel, Interview with author.

⁵⁹⁹ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “One Day This Will All Pass” adaptation.

Ex. 72 Suggested breath, phrasing, and changes in character, mm. 62-75.

For now, you have to know that you can ne-ver hurt just one per - son,

you can ne-ver hurt just one per - son.

Ex. 73 "Survival isn't an instinct. It's an act of sheer will," mm. 131-141.

Sur - vi - val is-n't an in - stinct. It's an act of sheer will!

2.4.3 Adaptation Notes

All The Boy's vocal lines have been incorporated into the piano accompaniment, except for mm. 102-103 as mentioned above. Whenever his text differs from that of The Grandmother, his words have been included in parenthesis. Some interludes have been shortened or cut from the vocal score for audition purposes (mm. 10-20 and 50-55). In addition, mm. 10-14 of the vocal score have been inserted in place of mm. 27-31 of the vocal score to achieve a fuller sounding accompaniment.

6.5 “The Valedictorian’s Aria”

6.5.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of The Valedictorian would suit light lyric sopranos with a strong middle register.

Range: E \flat 4-G5

Character: The Valedictorian is a young girl about sixteen or seventeen years old. Singers who perform this role would also perform the other auxiliary characters in the opera sung by Soprano 1.⁶⁰⁰ In Vancouver Opera’s production, soprano Melanie Krueger sang The Valedictorian and also doubled as a student throughout the rest of the work.⁶⁰¹

Setting: (Act 3, Scene 6) In this final scene of the opera, The Valedictorian gives her graduation speech. She motivates the crowd with hope for the future, oblivious of The Boy’s sadness. He listens to her cherished memories that fall so far from his own horrific experiences. The aria serves to contrast The Valedictorian’s view of graduation as a shining moment in the students’ lives and The Boy’s stark ideology that “School was just the end of a conveyor belt.”⁶⁰² When describing this moment, Koyczan summarizes the message he hopes to convey: “I don’t want to say to people the cliché: ‘It gets better.’ It doesn’t get better, you just get better at dealing with how bad it gets.”⁶⁰³ At the end of The Valedictorian’s speech, all the students toss their graduation caps in the air and exit happily. Only The Boy is left alone onstage.

⁶⁰⁰ Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, “Character List.”

⁶⁰¹ Rajani, “Innovative Murals and Provocative Posters Confront the Issue of Bullying.”

⁶⁰² Koyczan, Interview with author.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*

Aria 8: "The Valedictorian's Aria"⁶⁰⁴

Music: Neil Weisensel
 Libretto: Shane Koyczan

♩ = 60

5 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$ *Freely*

As your va-le-dic - to - ri - an

9

I've been look-ing for the word. The word that will sum up our ex-

13

per - i-ence. Bit-ter sweet is the word we use to des-cribe-some-thing both

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⁶⁰⁴ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from composer from Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, 61-71 (Act 3, Scene 6: mm. 16-115).

17

♩ = 132

good and bad. To-day is sweet in that we are

This system contains measures 17 through 20. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a half note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand.

21

all fin-al-ly grad - u-at-ing. To-day is al-so

This system contains measures 21 through 24. The vocal line continues with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter rest. The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note accompaniment.

25

bit-ter in that we will be leav-ing be-hind such great friends,—

This system contains measures 25 through 28. The vocal line starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note C5. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note accompaniment.

29

— and warm mem - o-ries. We've be-come a

This system contains measures 29 through 32. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note accompaniment.

33

fam' - ly, a fam' - ly. We are bound

37

— by the time we spent to - ge - ther and the ex - per - i - en - ces we've

40

shared. We've grown to-ge- ther and now ma-ny of us will

44

grow a - part. Grow a - part...

48

Our team spi-rit will re-main. We will do as our bas-ket-ball team

52

Più mosso

did this year. We will go go go!

55

We will do as our de-bate team did... Go go go!

58

We will do as our school band did... Go go go!

61

As we all will do through-out our

This system contains measures 61 through 64. It features a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part includes chords and a rhythmic bass line.

65

lives.

f

This system contains measures 65 through 68. The vocal line continues with the word "lives." and is followed by a long rest. The piano accompaniment features a dynamic marking of *f* and consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line.

69

molto legato

Af-ter to day there will be no one to tell us

This system contains measures 69 through 72. The vocal line begins with the instruction *molto legato* and includes triplet markings over the words "day" and "no". The piano accompaniment continues with a flowing eighth-note bass line and a treble line with some melodic movement.

73

where to go or what to do.

This system contains measures 73 through 76. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "where to go or what to do." The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern with eighth notes in the bass and chords in the treble.

77 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

We go our own way. No mat-ter what we choose to do

82

or who we be-come we will al - ways have this school to thank for

86

nur-tur-ing us in-to the peo - ple we are to - day. Con - grat - u - la - tions

91

class. To - day we are us! _____

96 ♩ = 96

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 96-101. The vocal line (top staff) begins with a whole note G4 in measure 96, followed by rests in measures 97-101. The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) starts in measure 96 with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays chords: G4-Bb4-Eb5 (measures 96-97), G4-Bb4-Eb5 (measures 98-99), and G4-Bb4-Eb5 (measures 100-101). The left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes: G3 (measures 96-97), G3 (measures 98-99), and G3 (measures 100-101). The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 101.

6.5.2 Performance and Interpretive Notes

The aria's form is as follows: Prelude (mm. 1-5), A (mm. 6-17), B (mm. 18-35), C (mm. 36-53), D (mm. 53-68), B (mm. 69-78), and A (mm. 79-101). As the students march in, the prelude portrays the solemnity of the graduation ceremony. Singers should perform the opening A Section (mm. 6-17) freely in a recitative style, following the inflection of the words and making sure to not give equal emphasis to every syllable. Here, both the exposed vocal line and Weisensel's specified rhythms help portray the character's nervousness while delivering her speech. For example, the triplet rhythm on "Valedictorian" depicts the character's attempt to speak clearly, while the sudden increase in textual rhythm at "I've been looking for the word," demonstrates a sudden burst of nervous energy (Ex. 74).

In Section B (mm. 18-35), singers should strive for *legato* phrasing and adhere strictly to the notated rhythms, accents, and dynamics as Weisensel uses these to accentuate the contrast of The Valedictorian's speech with The Boy's own school experience. For example, the rest before "friends" and the accent on "memories" gives emphasis to these words, making them feel like the "twist of a knife" to The Boy who had neither (Ex. 75).⁶⁰⁵ Throughout this section and for most of the aria, singers should strive to count with a half-note tactus even though the accompaniment's three eighth-note groupings distort the sense of a 4/4 meter. The most challenging part of this section is the initial entrance in m. 19 where singers may find it helpful to think of mm. 17-18 in triple time as a 12/8 measure leading with an eighth-note pickup into a 2/4 measure, and resuming the 4/4 time signature at m. 20.

⁶⁰⁵ Weisensel, Interview with author.

In Section C (mm. 36-53), the rhythmic values diminish giving the music a feeling of greater excitement. This leads into Section D (mm. 53-68) where singers should establish the *più mosso* tempo with the two quarter-note upbeats in m. 53. In Sections C and D, singers should continue to feel the beat in two rather than four with a half-note tactus. In regards to the 7/4 bars (mm. 54, 57, and 60), singers may find it useful to think of these as 3/2 measures with an added quarter-note breath. This way, their breath will help cue the accompaniment and coordinate the following entrance. In Section D, singers should follow Weisensel's rhythmic word setting carefully as it follows the text's natural inflection and will make singing the words easier. For example, making sure to sing proper eighth-notes instead of triplets on "as our debate" will help clear the diction (Ex. 76).

As mentioned earlier, during the Valedictorian's speech The Boy recalls The Old Man's war stories and reflects on how his experiences at school felt like a war as well. Weisensel musically and textually juxtaposes these two "warzones" by incorporating material from Act 1, Scene 1 where the soldiers were told to "Go, go, go that way until you're in the fight"⁶⁰⁶ into The Valedictorian's speech, where she excitedly motivates the crowd to "Go, go, go as we all will do throughout our lives!" (Ex. 77).⁶⁰⁷ The accompaniment features a forward propelling rhythmic motive (Ex. 78) and a moving eighth-note bass-line – an element inspired by the Montreal band, Arcade Fire's amplified bass style.⁶⁰⁸ In this aria, these elements serve to drive the piece forward and establish the speech's motivational affect. In addition, Weisensel's incorporates a drum set into the orchestration

⁶⁰⁶ Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, vocal score, 12 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 80-81).

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 67-69 (Act 3, Scene 6: mm. 76-82).

⁶⁰⁸ Weisensel, Interview with author. Arcade Fire, "We Exist," *Reflektor*, Arcade Fire, MP3, 26 May 2014, producer James Murphy and Markus Dravs, Label Merge, Montreal: Sonovox Studios.

to “act[...] as a kind of rhythmic engine.”⁶⁰⁹ The cymbals appears in increasingly shorter durations as the crowd gets excited and help to portray the youthful and energetic emotions of the graduation audience.⁶¹⁰

There should be no change in tempo at the *molto legato* and return of the B Section (mm. 69-78).⁶¹¹ Feeling the music in two and singing smooth, broad triplets will help portray The Valedictorian’s shift to a more introspective character as she reflects on how they will all be on their own from now on. From, “We go our own way,” (m. 77) and onwards, her confidence returns and she once again inspires the crowd. In contrast to the opening of the aria, singers should perform the closing recitative section (mm. 79-96) more strictly in tempo to drive the music forward to the end.⁶¹²

Ex. 74 Rhythms depicting character, mm. 7-10.⁶¹³

Freely

As your va-le-dic - to - ri - an I've been look-ing for the word.

⁶⁰⁹ Davis, “Shane L. Koyczan.”

⁶¹⁰ Weisensel and Koyczan, *Stickboy*, full score (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 2014), 413-423, (Act 3, Scene 6: mm. 51-91).

⁶¹¹ Weisensel, Interview with author.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “The Valedictorian’s Aria” adaptation.


Ex. 75 Words to highlight, mm. 26-31.



we will be leav-ing be-hind such great friends, and warm mem-o-ries.

Musical notation for Ex. 75: A single staff in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are: "we will be leav-ing be-hind such great friends, and warm mem-o-ries." The words "leav-ing" and "mem-o-ries" are underlined.

Ex. 76 Careful rhythms for clear diction, mm. 55-57.



We will do as our de-bate team did...

Musical notation for Ex. 76: A single staff in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are: "We will do as our de-bate team did..."

Ex. 77 "Go, go, go" music borrowed from Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 60-65.



Go go go! As we all will do through-out our lives.

Musical notation for Ex. 77: A three-staff system in G major, 4/4 time. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics: "Go go go! As we all will do through-out our lives." The middle staff is the piano accompaniment. The bottom staff is the bass line. The lyrics "Go go go!" are underlined. The word "lives." is underlined. A dynamic marking *f* is present in the piano accompaniment.

Ex. 78 Forward propelling rhythmic motive and continuous bass-line, mm. 55-57.

The image displays a musical score for two staves in 4/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The upper staff, labeled "Rhythmic Motive", features a sequence of chords: a triad of G4, B-flat4, and D5 in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and then a triad of G4, B-flat4, and D5 in the second measure, followed by another quarter rest. The lower staff, labeled "Continuous Bass-line", consists of a steady eighth-note pattern: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B-flat4, and C5. The bass-line is marked with an accent (>) under the G4 note in the second measure.

6.5.3 Adaptation Notes

To maintain continuity, the soprano chorus lines have been added to The Valedictorian's part in mm. 53, 57, and 60 on "Go, go, go." In these measures, the other chorus harmonies have been incorporated into the accompaniment with added accents to emphasize these beats. A final chord has been added to the adaptation to create a firmer ending for the aria.

7. *TRANSIT OF VENUS*

7.1 Background

Despite its depiction of the 18th century astronomer, Guillaume Joseph Hyacinthe Jean-Baptiste Le Gentil de la Galasière's (1725-1792) ill-fated life, the stars aligned for Manitoba Opera's production of *Transit of Venus*. Commissioned for its 35th season, the opera received unprecedented backing from private and government sectors as well as great community support.⁶¹⁴ In 1992, Larry Desrochers directed the premiere of Maureen Hunter's play, *Transit of Venus*, at the Manitoba Theatre Centre. It achieved great success and became the first Canadian play staged by Britain's prestigious Royal Shakespeare Theatre.⁶¹⁵ In 2005, Desrochers, who became Manitoba Opera's General Director, approached Hunter to adapt her play into a libretto as he felt it had "all the elements of great opera – huge, sweeping romantic themes and characters caught in larger-than-life situations."⁶¹⁶ Composed by Victor Davies, the opera, *Transit of Venus* premiered on 24 November 2007.

7.1.1 Librettist: Maureen Hunter

Originally from Saskatchewan and now based in Manitoba, Maureen Hunter (b. 1948) – one of Canada's most successful playwrights – has received two Governor General Award nominations, two Dora Mavor Moore Awards for Outstanding New Play, and the Lou

⁶¹⁴ Charles Staff, "New Productions New Roles: Manitoba opera bets on a tale of astronomical bad luck," *Opera Canada* 48, no. 4 (September, 2008): 18-19, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1158653?accountid=14656>; and Darlene Ronald, "News Release: Manitoba Opera to Stage World Premiere of New Opera Based on the Internationally Acclaimed Play, *Transit of Venus*," Manitoba Opera, 26 October 2006, accessed 1 April 2016, http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/news/press/2006_10_26.htm.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

Siminovitch Prize in Theatre.⁶¹⁷ Although theatres across North America and Britain frequently perform Hunter's works, she never envisioned that one would appear on the operatic stage.⁶¹⁸

Hunter first learned of *Le Gentil* in an astronomy class and gravitated towards his story because of how much he had sacrificed to fulfill his ambitions. As her imagination filled in parts of his life that history had forgotten, she discovered that "each of the characters in the story was on a quest."⁶¹⁹ Set in the 18th century when science began to test the tenet of religion, the characters in the opera also question their own relationships with God. Hunter's opera capitalizes on the allure of a period piece, yet remains "more accessible than traditional opera" because of her use of modern language and the way in which she addresses basic human values and emotions.⁶²⁰

7.1.2 Composer: Victor Davies

Born in Winnipeg, Victor Davies (b. 1939) has an active career as a composer, pianist, and conductor. He has written works for a wide variety of genres including opera, oratorio, theatre, musical theatre, film, and television.⁶²¹ Performed internationally, his works have also been featured in dramas and documentaries by The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CTV, and The National Film Board of Canada. In addition to

⁶¹⁷ The following biographical information is gathered from: "*Transit of Venus*," Manitoba Opera, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/transitofvenus/transitofvenus.html>; "Maureen Hunter," Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia, last modified 9 March 2012, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Hunter%2C%20Maureen>; and Jane Stewart, "*Transit of Venus* Study Guide," 7-8 and 19, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/learn/documents/DOC009.PDF>.

⁶¹⁸ Stewart, "*Transit of Venus* Study Guide," 7.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁶²⁰ Gwenda Nemerofsky, "Superb cast sets bar high in original opera," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 November 2007, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/historic/32592449.html>.

⁶²¹ The following biographical information is gathered from: Victor Davies, "Biography," Victor Davies Composer, accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.victordavies.com/biography.php>; "*Transit of Venus*," Manitoba Opera; and Stewart, "*Transit of Venus* Study Guide," 5-6 and 18.

writing over six hundred children's songs, Davies has also written several stage-works including: an opera, *Let Us Pay Tribute to Lord Gordon Gordon*; a musical epic, *Beowulf*; and an operetta, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (performed by the Toronto Operetta Theatre in 2008).

Throughout *Transit of Venus*, Davies utilizes musical motives, sound painting, quotations, and referential themes to create continuity and bridge the large lapses in time between acts.⁶²² Davies also connects musical motives to crucial moments in the characters' lives to help audiences empathize with them. For example when Celeste tries to seduce Le Gentil in "You Don't Find Love that Interesting" (Act 1, No. 11c), Davies quotes Georges Bizet's famous "Habanera" theme from *Carmen* to associate Celeste's overt display of sexuality with that of the infamous Carmen (Ex. 79).⁶²³ Davies also draws musical inspiration from a wide variety of sources, using sea shanties to accompany the men as they prepare for their voyage and referencing Gregorian chant as Madame Sylvie discusses her time at the convent.⁶²⁴ As Davies explains: "The aim of all this is to deliver immediate emotional communication in the music's support of the libretto. This in turn gives the audience points of reference and instant entry into the world of these characters and their stories."⁶²⁵

⁶²² Stewart, "Transit of Venus Study Guide," 5-6.

⁶²³ Ibid. An example of the "Habanera" theme can be found in Victor Davies and Maureen Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, n.p., 2007, copy obtained from composer, 147-149 (Act 1, No. 11c). Davies quotes the descending melodic line and accompaniment for this theme from Carmen's Aria, "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle." Refer to Georges Bizet and H. Meilhac, *Carmen*, vocal score, ed. Ernest Guiraud (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895), 44 (Act 1, No. 5: mm. 4-8).

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 6. Examples of sea shanties can be found in Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 22-32 (Act 1, No. 2: "Drinking Song"), and 81-88 (Act 1, No.7: "Packing Song"). For an example of Gregorian chant, refer to Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 47-49 (Act 1, No. 4: Madame Sylvie's Aria "When I was at the Convent," mm. 59-73).

⁶²⁵ Stewart, "Transit of Venus: Study Guide," 5-6.

7.2 List of Lead Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Manitoba production of *Transit of Venus* that premiered on 24 November 2007.⁶²⁶

Le Gentil (Baritone)	Russell Braun
Celeste (Soprano)	Monica Huisman
Madame Sylvie (Mezzo-Soprano)	Judith Forst
Margot (Mezzo- Soprano)	Jean Stilwell
Demarais (Tenor)	Colin Ainsworth

7.3 Opera Synopsis

Transit of Venus delves into the struggle between love and ambition.⁶²⁷ The title refers to a rare astronomical phenomenon that occurs only twice every hundred years or so, at an eight year interval, when Venus crosses between the Earth and the Sun. Scientists once believed that if accurately charted, these transits could solve “the noblest problem in astronomy”: the distance between the Earth and the Sun (The Astronomical Unit) and consequently, the size of the universe.⁶²⁸ In 1761 and 1769, scientists set out on internationally coordinated voyages to measure these transits from various positions across the globe.

⁶²⁶ The following cast list has been gathered from Darlene Ronald, “News Release: Russell Braun Heads Roster of Internationally Renowned Artists to Star in Manitoba Opera World Premiere of *Transit of Venus*,” Manitoba Opera, 12 March 2007, accessed 15 April 2016, http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/news/press/2007_03_12.htm.

⁶²⁷ Wayne Gooding, “Manitoba Opera: *Transit of Venus*,” *Opera Canada* 49, no. 1 (Feb, 2008): 38, accessed 15 April 2016. <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/220329682?accountid=1465>.

⁶²⁸ Jay M. Pasachoff, “Venus: It’s Now or Never,” *Physics World.com*, 1 May 2012, 36, accessed 15 April 2016, http://venus.novo-sibirsk.ru/files/PhysicsWorld_May2012pasachoff.pdf.

The opera takes place in 18th century France at the country home of the young and accomplished astronomer, Guillaume Le Gentil de la Galasière, who aspires to chart the transit of Venus. The three acts span eleven years and follow Le Gentil through two failed expeditions and a trail of broken promises with those he left behind.⁶²⁹

Act 1: In 1760, Le Gentil and his enthusiastic assistant, Demarais, celebrate after having secured a ship to Pondicherry, India, to chart Venus' first transit. Talented and charismatic, everyone admires Le Gentil, especially the three women of the household: his mother, Madame Sylvie; his mother's companion, Margot; and her young daughter, Celeste.

Le Gentil and Margot had a brief affair many years ago. Although he soon ended it to devote himself to his work and to God, she continues to hope that he will someday return to her. To Margot's annoyance, Celeste, being only fifteen and having just returned home from the convent, has also developed what everyone presumes is a childish infatuation with Le Gentil. Only Madame Sylvie realizes that her son has fallen in love with Celeste and demands that he make his intentions clear to both women before he leaves on his voyage.

At his mother's request, Le Gentil later confesses to Margot that he has fallen in love with Celeste and hopes to marry her upon his return. At hearing this news, Margot feels both betrayed and disgusted, especially considering the twenty-year age difference between him and her daughter.

Later that evening, Celeste comes to Le Gentil and expresses her sadness at being left behind. To appease her, he explains that he only leaves to fulfill a promise he once made to his father to serve God. In Le Gentil's mind, charting Venus' transit means doing God's work for the stars were "created by God to remind us we are mortal, to challenge us

⁶²⁹ The following synopsis has been summarized from Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score.

and diminish us, to move us endlessly to wonder [...] to help explain the ways of God to man."⁶³⁰ With his majestic words, Le Gentil charms Celeste into promising to marry him upon his return in two years.

Act 2: Because of a storm, Le Gentil missed Venus' transit yet he stayed abroad to continue his scientific exploration. Demarais, however, returned early from the voyage having become ill. Now, six years later, Madame Sylvie and Margot anxiously await Le Gentil's arrival while discussing Demarais' slow recovery and ill temperament. Since his travels, Demarais has grown bitter from the realization that Le Gentil, a man he once admired like a god, is only human and selfishly arrogant. When Celeste goes to visit him, Demarais cautions her that Le Gentil, like himself, has changed from his travels.

Upset by Demarais' comments, Celeste heads to the observatory where she discovers Le Gentil had been hiding for hours. They tentatively become reacquainted and soon quarrel like lovers. Celeste reveals that she has developed an insatiable thirst for knowledge, reading every book she could find to learn more about Le Gentil's travels. Le Gentil then asks Celeste to marry him to which she happily accepts. However, she soon realizes that he plans on abandoning her again to chart the second transit and furiously refuses him. She desperately begs him not to leave, but Le Gentil coaxes her until she finally concedes to wait for him again. This time however, he must promise to return immediately after the transit and not delay.

Transition: With no letter from Le Gentil in two years, everyone assumes he has died at sea. His servants bid farewell to each other as they leave his household and pray for his soul.

⁶³⁰ Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 143-145 (Act 1, No. 11b: mm. 14-41).

Act 3: Five years after his last departure, Le Gentil returns home to find that his house has been sold to cover his debts, Demarais has passed away, his mother has gone senile, and his prized seat at the French Academy of Sciences has been given away. When Margot discovers Le Gentil at the household, he futilely tries to explain his long delay and absence of contact. Although he fell ill, he confesses that he could not find the will to write because he had felt too ashamed, having lost his purpose in life and finally realizing all the pain he had brought to those he loved. Le Gentil proclaims that he has returned to France to make amends, especially with Celeste. Margot warns him that although Celeste has not married, he should not get his hopes up.

Celeste arrives and Le Gentil becomes awestruck by her beauty. He tries in vain to apologize, but Celeste stops him by revealing that she is pregnant. Since the child's father has passed away, she has decided to make a fresh start in New France with her mother. In anger, Le Gentil shames her for her impropriety but quickly apologizes. He begs her to marry him, saying that he will look past her one night of indiscretion. She corrects him, explaining that she had truly fallen in love with the one man who knew Le Gentil best, the man to whom she had turned for consoling when grieving for him: Demarais. Although she never names him as her lover, Le Gentil quickly makes the deduction. Before she leaves, Celeste declares that she no longer loves nor pities Le Gentil.

Everyone, including Celeste, presumed that Le Gentil had successfully charted the second transit as his last letter, written on the morning of the transit, had described how beautiful and clear of a day it was. However, Le Gentil shocks Margot by revealing that an aberrant storm had come through and foiled his plans once again. In his devastation, Le Gentil professes that despite all his disappointments, he never considered that he would

lose Celeste as well. Knowing no way to console Le Gentil, Margot leaves him all alone in the empty house.

Unlike the play, the real-life Le Gentil eventually regained his estate and seat in the Academy, got married, and had a daughter. Although he was unable to chart the transits of Venus, Le Gentil left a “legacy that went beyond astronomy” having written two books detailing the accounts of his voyage and which compiled “a wealth of geographical, botanical, zoological, archaeological, and ethnographic information, maps, and illustrations.”⁶³¹

7.4 “I Need Guillaume”

7.4.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of Celeste would suite lyric coloratura voices with an upper extension and ease in the upper *passaggio* as singers need to have the power to cut through the opera’s thick orchestration. To portray Celeste’s development from a fifteen year-old girl to a twenty-six year-old woman, singers should rely solely on their acting and not affect their voice in any way. Artificially lightening or darkening their sound to reflect Celeste’s change in maturity will tire the voice and make it difficult for singers to sustain their voices throughout this large and challenging role.

Range: F4-B♭5

Character: Desrochers, the opera’s dramaturg, describes Celeste’s role as being “the most challenging in the opera, as Celeste grows from a precocious young girl to a young

⁶³¹ Stewart, “*Transit of Venus* Study Guide,” 14.

woman who's been aged too soon by loss."⁶³² She is a beautiful, intelligent woman, and a great dreamer who thirsts for knowledge and adventure. Because women in her time were limited to domestic duties, Celeste knows in her heart that her dreams will always remain dreams. Instead, she falls in love in with Le Gentil, twenty years her elder, because she wants so much to be like him: audacious, worldly, and carefree. She lives vicariously through him, and in his absence, she studies his letters and books to feel closer to him and to fulfill her lust for adventure. Celeste clings to Le Gentil obsessively as her youth and inexperience has led her to mistake worship and blind admiration for love.⁶³³ Only after she moves past him after his presumed death does she experience true love with Demarais.⁶³⁴

Setting: (Act 2, No. 24) Six years have passed since Le Gentil first left to chart Venus' transit, and Celeste – now twenty-one years old – has grown into a beautiful, young woman. As the household prepares for Le Gentil's return, Demarais tries to warn Celeste not to expect the same man she once knew and reminds her that Le Gentil, like any other man, has his flaws. Celeste refuses to listen and heads to the observatory where she discovers Le Gentil had been hiding for hours.

Unlike his previous charming self, Le Gentil acts brashly which angers Celeste. Now that he has returned from his grand adventure, he feels his "life is an odyssey meant to be seized and savoured" and that everything around him seems trivial in comparison.⁶³⁵ He tries to describe his experiences to Celeste but stops himself, assuming that as a woman she

⁶³² Ronald, "News Release: Russell Braun Heads Roster of Internationally Renowned Artists to Star in Manitoba Opera World Premiere of *Transit of Venus*."

⁶³³ Maureen Hunter, e-mail correspondence with author, 19 April 2016.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 261 (Act 2, No. 21: mm. 18-21).

would be incapable of comprehending such things. Celeste quickly proves to him that she cares little about needlework and has instead spent all her time making maps of his travels and reading his books and letters to feel closer to him.

Flattered by her efforts, Le Gentil asks Celeste to marry him once again to which she promptly agrees. He happily tells her how he wants to start a family with her and spend every moment together until he leaves. Hearing this, Celeste suddenly realizes that he had been planning all along to chart the second transit and adamantly refuses to marry him. In this aria, Celeste desperately pleads with Le Gentil to stay with her. She tries to explain to him that she needs him with her and that she cannot go on having a relationship with him through only her dreams and his letters. She needs to move on with her life, but most of all, as she says in Hunter's play: "I need you here, Guillaume. Beside me. To help me be what I want to be. [...] I want to be – what you are."⁶³⁶ Despite her protests, Le Gentil eventually convinces Celeste to wait for him on the condition that he promise to return immediately after the second transit in three years time.

⁶³⁶ Maureen Hunter, *Transit of Venus* (Winnipeg: Blizzard Publishing Inc., 1992), 76.

Aria 9: "I Need You Guillaume"⁶³⁷

Music: Victor Davies
Libretto: Maureen Hunter

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 106 and a dynamic of *mp*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line starts with the lyrics "I need you, _ Guill-". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand, both in B-flat major. The score is divided into three systems. The first system covers measures 1-5. The second system starts at measure 6 and includes the lyrics "aume. I can't make do an - y - more with dreams and le - tters_ and a". It features a triplet of eighth notes in the vocal line. The third system starts at measure 10 and includes the lyrics "phan - tom lo - ver.". It includes an *accel.* marking and a change in time signature to 5/4 for the final measure.

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⁶³⁷ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 280-286 (Act 2, No. 24: mm. 3-75).

13 *rall.* *f* ♩ = 108-112

I need you, Guill-aume. I

16

can't make do an-y more with dreams and le-tters and a

19

phan-tom lo-ver. I want a real

22

(,)

lo- ver. I want a hus - band and a fu - ture. I

25

mf

don't want to be stuck on a shelf, like a

28

book no - bo - dy — reads.

31

I want to get star - ted... with my

p

35

life. My life is an od-yss-ey, too!

mf

39

Why must it be played

41

out on such a tin - y

cresc.

43

map?

45

f

accel. *rall.*

48

p ♩ = 96

I need you, Guill aume. I can't make do an-y more with

p

53 *accel.*

(,) 3

dreams and le-tters_ and a phan - tom lo - ver.

56 *rall.* *ff* ♩ = 108-112

I need you, _____ Guill -

59

aume. I can't make do an-y-more with dreams and le-tters_ and a

63 *rall.* *mp*

phan - tom lo - ver. I need you, Guill

67 *p*

aume. I need you, Guill - aume. I

70

need you, Guill - aume.

7.4.2 Performance and Interpretive Notes

As previously discussed, Davies associates musical motives with certain characters and in this aria, he incorporates “Le Gentil’s Motive,” a descending line that concentrates on descending half steps and tritones (Ex. 79, mm. 1-4). This motive represents Le Gentil’s belief that his astronomical ambitions serve God and therefore, hold greatest importance.⁶³⁸ Each time it appears, it reminds the audience of the futility of Celeste’s attempt to change his mind.

The aria follows the form of A (mm. 1-20), B (mm. 20-45), and A’ (mm. 45-72). The A Sections feature a theme (mm. 4-12) that repeats in varied forms throughout the piece to portray Celeste’s desperate pleading. Singers should ensure to differentiate each repetition of this theme with a change in expression and emotion. The theme’s presentation (mm. 4-12) in the opening A Section (mm. 1-20) depicts Celeste’s shock at realizing that Le Gentil plans to depart again with its *mp* dynamic and static melodic line of repeated A4 pitches (Ex. 80). The second statement of the theme (mm. 13-20) has added leaps in the vocal line, particularly the leap from A4 to E5 (mm. 12-13), to reflect Celeste’s passionate outpouring of emotion (Ex. 81). Note: Guillaume should be pronounced [gijom].

In Section B (mm. 20-45), the music reflects Celeste’s loss of control and emotional instability through frequent modulations and an even greater leap from A4 to G5 (mm. 20-21). However, it suddenly becomes assertive, shifting to D major when Celeste quotes Le Gentil’s earlier words from Act 2, No. 21 to proclaim: “My life is an odyssey too” (mm. 36-39).⁶³⁹ The ascending chromatic passage – again beginning on A4 – and the *crescendi* that

⁶³⁸ Victor Davies, Interview with author, 13 April 2016.

⁶³⁹ Celeste quotes Le Gentil’s line in Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 261 (Act 2, No. 21: mm. 18-21).

follow reflect Celeste's growing anger (mm. 42-46), building to the accompaniment's *forte* chords at m. 45.

In the A' section (mm. 45-72), Celeste pleads with Le Gentil once again as the theme returns in its original presentation (mm. 48-56). The theme's second statement (mm. 57-65) ascends an octave from A4 to A5 (mm. 57-59) and reaches further to B♭5, the highest note of the piece (m. 62). Its higher range, larger leaps, and louder *fortissimo* dynamic portray Celeste's absolute desperation (Ex. 82). Singers should take care throughout the aria, and especially in these phrases, to avoid excessive *portamenti* between leaps.

The end of the aria (mm. 65-72) focuses on the first fragment of the theme, "I Need You Guillaume" and returns to the opening theme's repeating A's (mm. 70-71). The aria closes in D minor and grows quieter as if, like Hunter suggests, Celeste both fears Le Gentil's reaction and senses his forthcoming rejection.⁶⁴⁰ Immediately after the aria, Le Gentil's expresses his frustration with Celeste by saying: "What would you have me do, stay here and grow miserable? And make you miserable too?"⁶⁴¹

Davies points out that he composed the opera in a more lyrical, vocal style for the purpose of textual clarity and that this should always remain the singer's main priority.⁶⁴² For the long, sustained notes at the ends of phrases, Davies suggests singers strive for legato lines yet take breaths when needed in order to maintain clear diction.⁶⁴³ Suggested breath marks have been added in the adaptation under the composer's advisement.

One of the challenges of this piece stems from its many extended lyrical passages and frequent held notes. Singers must take care to pace their breath and dynamics

⁶⁴⁰ Hunter, e-mail correspondence with author.

⁶⁴¹ Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 287 (Act 2, No. 25: mm. 1-7).

⁶⁴² Davies, Interview with author.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

efficiently. Carefully observing the dynamic placement will help with this. For in many cases, Davies expects singers to sustain the same volume and let the underlying accompaniment take precedence, such as in Ex. 83 when the accompaniment comes in with “Le Gentil’s Motive” (Ex. 83).⁶⁴⁴ In addition, to maintain the legato style of the piece, singers should ensure to sing true triplets rather than sixteenth notes when written, as on “and a phantom” and “and a future” (Ex. 84).

Depending on the weight of the voice and due to the high tessiture of the phrase, singers may find it easier to sing mm. 59-65 with a breath after “anymore,” instead of after “letters” (Ex. 85). In this phrase, singers should modify towards taller, more open vowels and use more of a “British” rather than an “American” singing pronunciation to avoid building unnecessary tension and producing an overly bright tone. For example, for “anymore,” singers should aim for more of an [ɔ] than an [o] vowel and for “dreams,” singers should sing more of an [ɪ] instead of an [i] vowel. Also, for “letter” and “lover,” singers should pronounce the “-er” as more of an [ə] rather than an [ɚ].

⁶⁴⁴ Davies, Interview with author.

Ex. 79 Le Gentil's Motive, mm. 1-4.⁶⁴⁵

Ex. 80 Presentation of the theme, mm. 4-12.

I need you, — Guillaume. I can't make do an-y-more with dreams and le-tters and a phan-tom lo ver. _____

Ex. 81 Second statement of the theme in Section A, mm. 13-20.

I need you, — Guillaume. I can't make do an-y more with dreams and le-tters and a phan-tom lo ver. _____

Ex. 82 Second statement of the theme in Section A', mm. 57-65.

I need you, — Guillaume. I can't make do an-y-more with dreams and le-tters and a phan-tom lo ver. _____

⁶⁴⁵ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author's "I Need You Guillaume" adaptation. The "Le Gentil's Motive" also appears in the accompaniment in mm. 12-15, 47-50, and 56-59.)

Ex. 83 "Le Gentil's Motive," mm. 10-13.

phan-tom lo ver.

accel. *rall.*

f

Ex. 84 Triplet figure, mm. 9-10 and m. 23.

(mm. 9-10) dreams and le-tters and a phan-tom lo ver.

(m. 23) hus-band and a fu-ture.

Ex. 85 Diction suggestions for mm. 59-65.

I can't make do an-y-more with dreams and le-tters and a phan-tom lo-ver.

[ə] [ɪ] [ə] [ə]

7.4.3 Adaptation Notes

The first four measures of Act 2, No. 24 of the original vocal score have been cut and altered to begin the adaption without the recitative. In addition, some of the tied octave chords in the left hand of the piano have been omitted to increase legibility.

7.5 “No, You Don’t Understand”

7.5.1 Aria Description

Character: In the five years since Act 2, Celeste has matured from a passionate dreamer into a practical realist, having loved and grieved for the two men in her life. As Hunter describes it, now that Celeste enters into motherhood, “She gives up dreaming of the impossible and focuses instead on what she can achieve.”⁶⁴⁶

Range: E4-A5

Setting: (Act 3, No. 36-37) Le Gentil returns home a broken man with no estate, career, or purpose in life. He hopes to finally marry Celeste but soon learns that in his absence, she had fallen in love with Demarais and is now pregnant with his child. Unfortunately for Celeste, Demarais passed away after relapsing again from the chronic pneumonia he suffered since the first transit expedition. However, as Hunter summarizes, with Demarais, Celeste “learn[ed] to love a real man, as opposed to an idea of, or an ideal of, a man,” for unlike Le Gentil, Demarais had physically been there for Celeste, to hold and comfort her as she grieved.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶ Hunter, e-mail correspondence with author.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

Aria 10: "No, You Don't Understand"⁶⁴⁸

Music: Victor Davies
Libretto: Maureen Hunter

Parlando
mp *mf* ♩ = 120

One in - dis - cre - tion? No, you don't un - der - stand.

4

I grieved you, Guill - aume. If

7

rooms could talk, these rooms would tell how much I

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⁶⁴⁸ Aria adapted by the author with copyright permission from the composer from Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 357-365 (Act 3, No. 36-37).

10 *mf*

grieved. At first I went to him...

13

sim-ply to talk a-bout you. He knew you so

17

well. It was a way of be - ing

20

close to you.

23

Then one day I looked at him and

26

Meno mosso, *f*

ev - ery - thing had changed. I

29 *poco rit.* *sub. mf*

was - n't griev - ing an - y - more. It

31 *molto rit.* *f* ♩ = 112

was - n't you I want - ed to be close to, it was him.

34

Be - cause he gave me so much joy!

37

I loved him _____ with ev-ery-thing I

40 *mf* Poco più mosso

had. _____ I loved him the

mf

43 *poco rit.* *molto rit.* *ff*

way I'd want-ed to love you. For

ff

46 $\text{♩} = 112$

se - ven months. Sev - en months!

49 *sub. meno mosso* *poco rall.*

mf subito

52 *mp* *meno mosso*

mp *p*

Sev - en months. It seems to be my

55 *molto rit.* ♩ = 72

fate to fall in love with men who go a - way.

59 **Più mosso** ♩ = 84 *Parlando mf*

You did what you were meant to do. You let the

62 ♩ = 84 *3 accel.* ♩ = 104

beau ty___ of the world and all its my-ster-ies___ touch you and trans

65 $\text{♩} = 112$ *molto rit.*

form you. You kept an o - pen heart. For

69 $\text{♩} = 88$ *poco rit.* *mf* $\text{♩} = 88$ *poco rit.*

all those things, I loved you. For all those things, I loved you.

74 *mp* $\text{♩} = 92$

But I don't love you now and I ne ver could a-gain,

78

and I can't pi-ty you.

mf

83 *(Celeste exits.)*

mp *mp*

7.5.2 Performance and Interpretive Notes

As Celeste's final scene in the opera, this aria allows singers to show great emotional depth and dramatic characterization. Davies integrates many thematic references throughout this through-composed aria, subtly adding to its emotional intricacy while also structuring the piece into six sections. Based on its thematic material, the aria may be divided into the following sections: Introductory Recitative (m. 1), A (mm. 2-10), B (mm. 10-22), C (mm. 22-54), Recitative (mm. 54-57), D (mm. 58-63), E (mm. 64-74), F (mm. 74-84), and Postlude (mm. 84-88).

Section A (mm. 2-10) features thematic material reminiscent of "I Need You Guillaume" to remind the audience that Le Gentil had chosen to leave Celeste even though she had begged him to stay (Ex. 86).⁶⁴⁹ In Section B (mm.10-22) when Celeste describes how well Demarais had known Le Gentil, Davies recalls music from an earlier scene (Act 1, No. 8) in which Demarais glorifies Le Gentil's scientific achievements (Ex. 87).⁶⁵⁰

Section C (mm. 22-54) draws upon "Le Gentil and Celeste's Love Motive" (Ex. 88).⁶⁵¹ It appears throughout the opera when the two share moments of physical intimacy, such as when Le Gentil kisses her hand (Act 1, No. 11) or when he touches her face (Act 1, No. 11f).⁶⁵² Its presence here accentuates the irony of the situation as Celeste alludes to her more physical and passionate love for Demarais: "I loved him the way I'd wanted to love you."⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁹ The Section A Theme in "No, You Don't Understand" resembles the Section A Theme in "I Need You Guillaume." Refer to the author's "I Need You Guillaume" adaptation, mm. 15-22.

⁶⁵⁰ For a musical example, refer to: Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 95-96 (Act 1, No. 8: mm. 10-17).

⁶⁵¹ Davies, Interview with author.

⁶⁵² For musical examples of "Le Gentil and Celeste's Love Motive" refer to Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 136-137 (Act 1, No. 11: mm. 102-108), and 165 (Act 1, No. 11f, mm. 63-64).

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 360 (Act 1, No. 36: mm. 41-44).

Section D (mm. 58-64) amalgamates a multitude of thematic references. For example, before Celeste says to Le Gentil, “You did what you were meant to do,” Davies incorporates a snippet of “Le Gentil’s Motive” (mm. 58-59) as a reminder of his selfish aspirations (Ex. 89).⁶⁵⁴ When Celeste tells Le Gentil she had always admired and loved him for following his dreams, Davies quotes musical and textual material from, “Of Course I Want to Marry You” (Act 2, No. 21), echoing the moment when Le Gentil explains to Celeste how his experiences abroad have changed him (Ex. 90 and 91).⁶⁵⁵ In mm. 64-74, Davies also incorporates a small chromatic motive from Act 1, No. 3 where Margot warns Celeste that Le Gentil will break her heart as he had also broken Margot’s: “It will be the same for you” (Ex. 92).⁶⁵⁶ Its inclusion here seems to affirm Margot’s melancholy predictions of her daughter’s relationship with Le Gentil.

When singing Celeste’s final words to Le Gentil (mm. 74-84), singers should communicate them in a “matter-of-fact” tone without any bitterness. As Hunter says, “I don’t think she intends to hurt him so much as make him understand that his dream of her is no longer achievable.”⁶⁵⁷ Celeste expresses that although she had once admired and loved Le Gentil, she no longer has the capacity to do so. Singers may find the following passage from Hunter’s play useful in interpreting Celeste’s emotions as she describes them in further detail here:

It wasn’t meant to be.
Once I understood that, I was able to let you go.
It wasn’t easy, but I did it.

⁶⁵⁴ Refer to 7.4.2 and Ex. 89 for discussion on “Le Gentil’s Motive.”

⁶⁵⁵ For an example of borrowed material from “Of Course I Want to Marry You,” refer to Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 259 and 261-262 (Act 2, No. 21: mm. 1-2 and 21-33, “musical quotation”), and 261-262 (Act 2, No. 21: mm. 21-33, “textual quotation”).

⁶⁵⁶ For an example of the chromatic motive, refer to Davies and Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, vocal score, 38-39 (Act 1, No. 3: mm. 54-68).

⁶⁵⁷ Hunter, e-mail correspondence with author.

And there's no going back for me now, Guillaume.
I can't go back. It's finished.⁶⁵⁸

Although Celeste sees the world in a more realistic and practical manner, her decision to emigrate to New France with her child also lets her finally take the adventure she always dreamed of.⁶⁵⁹ Without Le Gentil to hold her back, she finally has the freedom to live her own "odyssey."⁶⁶⁰

As in the previous aria, Davies leaves the duration of the long, sustained notes at the ends of phrases up to the discretion of the singer in order to obtain optimal legato and textual clarity.⁶⁶¹ Singers should perform the opening measure and mm. 54-61 with more freedom as in a recitative style and carefully observe Davies' tenuto markings throughout the aria to guide their word emphasis (Ex. 93).⁶⁶² Singers should also treat the many tempi markings as more of a guideline to enhance their own dramatic and musical portrayal.

⁶⁵⁸ Hunter, *Transit of Venus*, 91.

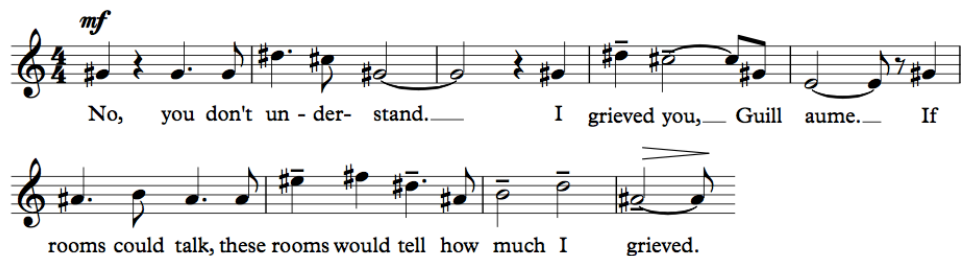
⁶⁵⁹ Hunter, e-mail correspondence with author.

⁶⁶⁰ Refer to the discussion of "odyssey" in 7.4.1: Character.

⁶⁶¹ Davies, Interview with author.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

Ex. 86 Section A Theme, mm. 2-10.⁶⁶³



mf

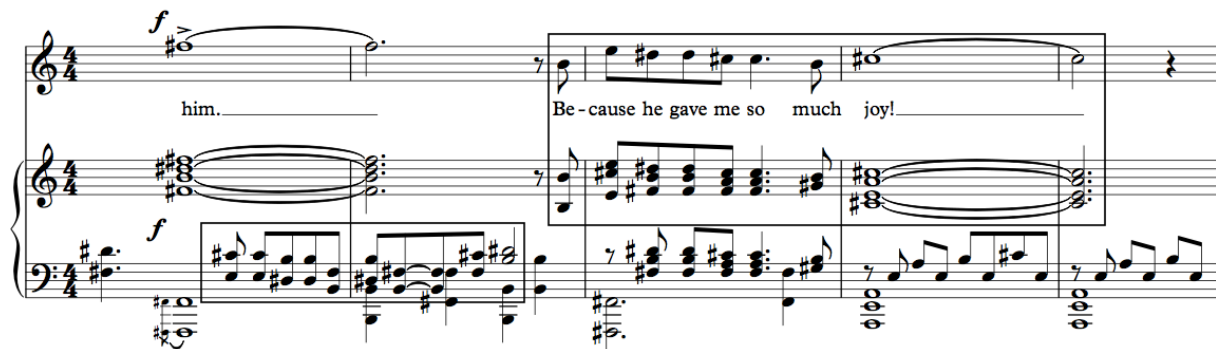
No, you don't un - der - stand. I grieved you, Guill aume. If
rooms could talk, these rooms would tell how much I grieved.

Ex. 87 Section B Theme, mm. 14-20.



He knew you so well. It was a way of be ing close to you.

Ex. 88 “Le Gentil and Celeste’s Love Motive,” mm. 33-37.



f

him. Be - cause he gave me so much joy!

f

⁶⁶³ The following musical examples have been excerpted from the author’s “No, You Don’t Understand” adaptation.

Ex. 89 Fragment of “Le Gentil’s Motive,” mm. 58-59.

Musical notation for Ex. 89, a piano fragment in 4/4 time with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand.

Ex. 90 Musical quotation of “Of Course I Want to Marry You” (Act 2, No. 21), mm. 60-61.

Parlando mf
Musical notation for Ex. 90, a vocal line in 4/4 time with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and the instruction *Parlando*. The lyrics are "You did what you were meant to do."

Ex. 91 Textual quotation of “Of Course I Want to Marry You” (Act 2, No. 21), mm. 61-68.

Musical notation for Ex. 91, a vocal line in 4/4 time with an accelerando (*accel.*) marking. The lyrics are "You let the beau ty__ of the world and all its my-ster ies_ touch you and trans form you. You kept an o - pen heart.____"

Ex. 92 Chromatic motive, mm. 64-67.

Musical notation for Ex. 92, a vocal line in 4/4 time with a chromatic motive. The lyrics are "touch you and trans -form you. You kept an o - pen heart."

8. *MARY'S WEDDING*

8.1 Background

For Pacific Opera Victoria's commission, Artistic Director, Timothy Vernon "wanted something that was not just worthy, not just Canadian, but something with real spark."⁶⁶⁴ He found that in Stephen Massicotte's play, *Mary's Wedding*, which premiered at the Alberta Theatre Project's playRites Festival in 2002. Since then, it has been in production almost continuously and has become one of North America's most produced plays.⁶⁶⁵ It draws the audience in and touches the heart. MacDonald remarks, "When I first saw the play, big grown-up man like I am, I definitely shed tears."⁶⁶⁶ Vernon also felt that the work, being "so moving, so very real, touching and emotional," would adapt well to the operatic genre because of its "musical through-line, with strands of memory and bits of dreams."⁶⁶⁷

When it came to the music, Vernon immediately thought of the Juno-award winning composer, Andrew Paul MacDonald. As Vernon describes, "It was an instinctive thing."⁶⁶⁸ He adds: "When I heard Andrew's Violin Concerto – in my opinion, the best Canadian violin concerto every composed – standing in the middle of a music store. I knew he was our composer. His music is approachable and human, very modern in sensibility, but very tuneful too."⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁴ Robin Miller, "New Productions New Roles: *Mary's Wedding*," *Opera Canada* 52, no. 3 (Fall, 2011): 14, accessed 22 August 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/963624173?accountid=14656>.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., and Stephen Massicotte, "Notes from the Librettist," Pacific Opera Victoria: *Mary's Wedding* 2011 World Première, 2011, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.pov.bc.ca/mwedding-notes.html>.

⁶⁶⁶ Marsha Lederman, "Lest We Forget, Opera Breathes New Life into *Mary's Wedding*," *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 2011, accessed 22 August 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/music/lest-we-forget-opera-breathes-new-life-into-marys-wedding/article4183258>.

⁶⁶⁷ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 14.

⁶⁶⁸ Lederman, "Lest We Forget, Opera Breathes New Life into *Mary's Wedding*."

⁶⁶⁹ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 15.

Commissioned in 2008, *Mary's Wedding* premiered at the McPherson Playhouse in Victoria on 10 November 2011. Its costs including workshop, commission, and production fees totalled around \$700,000. Pacific Opera Victoria received special funding from Opera.ca's Canadian Opera Creation Fund, The Victoria Foundation, The Koerner Foundation, and other sponsors.⁶⁷⁰ Intended as a smaller-scale production, *Mary's Wedding* premiered in an intimate theatre with a cast of three, a small chorus, and a 35-piece orchestra. As Vernon says, "the goal with this production [was] not to create a grand, extravagant opera, but to tell a story that resonates with audiences."⁶⁷¹ *Mary's Wedding* has since been featured on CBC's "Saturday Afternoon at the Opera" (2012) and revived by Pacific Opera Victoria as a school tour production (2015).

Mary's Wedding tells a tragic love story between a young British girl who recently immigrated to Canada and a Saskatchewan farm boy who enlists in WW1. The opera opened the day before Remembrance Day to build upon its theme of remembrance. As Vernon points out, "there's hardly a Canadian family without memories of [WWI] in some form."⁶⁷² Along side the production, Pacific Opera Victoria created several WWI community outreach projects such as the *Memory Project*, which allowed audiences to share their personal war stories and memories online (<http://maryswedding.websitetoolbox.com>). They also collaborated with the Royal BC Museum and the University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections to create a temporary exhibit of WWI memorabilia entitled *The*

⁶⁷⁰ Amy Smart, "Anatomy of an Opera: *Mary's Wedding*," *Times Colonist*, 6 November 2011, 2, accessed 21 August 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/903886337?accountid=14656>.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Lederman, "Lest We Forget, Opera Breathes New Life into *Mary's Wedding*."

World of Mary's Wedding: Reminiscences of WWI, as well as a permanent virtual exhibit accessible at: <http://worldofmaryswedding.library.uvic.ca>.⁶⁷³

Although steeped in Canadian history, *Mary's Wedding* tells a heart-breaking love story that all audiences can connect. As Vernon summarizes, the opera has “a Canadian frame around a universal experience of love and loss.”⁶⁷⁴

8.1.1 Librettist: Stephen Massicotte

Stephen Massicotte (b. 1969), born in Trenton and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario, has become one of Canada's most-produced playwrights.⁶⁷⁵ He did not receive any formal writing instruction but instead learned through his experiences as an actor. After completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Calgary, Massicotte helped to establish Calgary's Ground Zero Theatre and The Shakespeare Company. His earlier works consist mostly of plays written for Calgary's Fringe Festival in which he also acted. They include *The Boy's Own Jedi Handbook*, *My Life of Crime*, *A Farewell to Kings: A Banger Play*, and *Looking After Eden*.

Massicotte's talent came to fruition with his first full-length work, *Mary's Wedding*. The play took him three years to research and write and an additional two years to finesse under the guidance of the Alberta Theatre Projects. After its premiere at the playRites Festival in 2002, *Mary's Wedding* became an immediate success. It launched Massicotte's

⁶⁷³ “*Mary's Wedding* Memory Project and Community Partnerships,” Pacific Opera Victoria: *Mary's Wedding* 2011 World Première, 2011, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.pov.bc.ca/mwedding-notes.html>.

⁶⁷⁴ Timothy Vernon, “Notes from the Artistic Director and Conductor,” Pacific Opera Victoria: *Mary's Wedding* 2011 World Première, 2011, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.pov.bc.ca/mwedding-notes.html>.

⁶⁷⁵ The following biographical information has been gathered from: “Stephen Massicotte, Librettist,” Pacific Opera Victoria, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.pov.bc.ca/bios/massicotte.html>; and “Stephen Massicotte,” Playwrights Canada Press, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.playwrightscanada.com/index.php/stephen-massicotte.html>.

career and won the Betty Mitchell Award for Outstanding New Play (2002) and the Gwen Pharis Ringwood Award for Outstanding New Publication. Since then, *Mary's Wedding* has been performed internationally, translated to French, as well as adapted into both an opera and a screenplay.

Massicotte's more recent works include *Pervert*, *The Emperor of Atlantis*, *The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion* (2007 Canadian Author's Association Carol Bolt Award for Best English-Language Play and 2007 Gwen Paris Ringwood Award), and *The Clockmaker* (2009 Betty Mitchell Award and 2011 Toronto Critics' Association Award for Best Canadian Play). Massicotte has also written a few screenplays including *The Dark* (2005), *Ginger Snaps* (2004) (AMPIA Award), and television scripts for the Disney series, *Honey, I Shrank the Kids* and CBC's *Tom Stone*. Massicotte is a member of the Alberta Playwrights Network, the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers, and the Playwrights Guild of Canada. He now resides in New York City.

When writing *Mary's Wedding*, Massicotte took inspiration from his own heartbreak as well as from the stories of two women. The first woman, his ex-girlfriend's aunt, never married after her lover died in WWII and instead kept the stockings he had given her safely tucked away in a box. Massicotte read about the second woman in the paper. She had passed away at the age of ninety-one, clasping on to an autographed picture of her young love, a soldier who had died in WWI. In an interview with *The Globe and Mail*, Massicotte explains why these stories intrigued him:

Those people never transmit their story because they tend to not have kids. So we forget all about them, because no one passes on that that occurred. We end up having grandparents that wear poppies and get

us to go to Remembrance Day [ceremonies]. That story is being passed on. But we don't know about all these people [who died].⁶⁷⁶

The relationship between the two protagonists, Mary and Charlie, spun off from Massicotte's own heartbreak as he explains in the program notes of the Alberta Theatre Projects' premiere of the play, *Mary's Wedding*:

So this was going to be a war play. However, I was in love when I wrote it and I thought it was more of a love to end all loves. This is not that love story but the more I loved her, the more Mary and Charlie loved each other. The more I longed to return to her, the more they longed to return to each other. So the war play became a love story. I wrote it to forget her and to get her back and to remember her and to let her go.⁶⁷⁷

When it comes the libretto, Massicotte describes himself as "an opera neophyte" who had to learn on the job, remarking that "it's really cool discovering that an opera has less to do with a musical and more to do with a play. They're doing scenes, not songs."⁶⁷⁸ In realizing that performers had "to sing what the actors cry on!" he often had to ask himself, "How do I say what I said in less?"⁶⁷⁹ As a result, Massicotte cut about thirty to forty percent of his play's text and entrusted the music to portray the story.⁶⁸⁰ In the play version of *Mary's Wedding*, only two actors appear and Mary takes on the role of Flowerdew in the war scenes. However, for the opera, Massicotte and MacDonald decided to add the role of Flowerdew as well as a chorus to comment and fill out the action. Despite all these

⁶⁷⁶ Lederman, "Lest We Forget, Opera Breathes New Life into *Mary's Wedding*."

⁶⁷⁷ Stephen Massicotte, Program notes of Alberta Theatre Projects' 2002 production of *Mary's Wedding*, quoted in Anne Nothof, "Mary's Wedding," Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia, 10 November 2011, accessed 21 August 2016, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Mary's%20Wedding>.

⁶⁷⁸ Lederman, "Lest We Forget, Opera Breathes New Life into *Mary's Wedding*."

⁶⁷⁹ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 15.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

adjustments, Massicotte embraces the opera's libretto adaptation "as a companion, a sister to the play. It's *Mary's Wedding: The Opera*."⁶⁸¹

8.1.2 Composer: Andrew Paul MacDonald

Composer and guitarist, Andrew Paul MacDonald (b. 1958), born in Guelph, Ontario, earned a DMA in Composition from The University of Michigan (1985).⁶⁸² He currently serves on faculty at Bishop's University and has also taught at Brandon University and Wilfrid Laurier University. MacDonald co-founded and served as the artistic director of Ensemble Musica Nova and as vice-president and council of the Canadian League of Composers (1993-1997). His compositions have received numerous awards including the Juno Award for Best Classical Composition (*Violin Concerto*, 1995). His works have been commissioned and performed by many of Canada's major ensembles, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Opera Company, l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, l'Orchestre symphonique de Québec, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, CBC Vancouver Orchestra, and Calgary Philharmonic. His compositions have also been produced by Canadian Music Centre's Centrediscs, broadcasted on CBC and Société Radio-Canada, and performed internationally in England, Norway, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States. MacDonald has written numerous works for chamber ensembles and orchestra; however, *Mary's Wedding* is his first opera.

⁶⁸¹ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 15.

⁶⁸² The following biographical information has been gathered from: Tom Gordon, "MacDonald, Andrew P.," in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed 22 August 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45465>; and Andrew Paul MacDonald, "Biography," Andrew MacDonald Website, accessed 26 August 2016, <http://aMacDonald.maceman.ca/biography>.

After reading the script of *Mary's Wedding*, MacDonald describes how inspiration seemed to leap from its pages: "Lines from the play suddenly popped into my head as tunes and the music just started flowing onto my page. [I] [c]ouldn't stop it."⁶⁸³ He found the story's dream-like stream of consciousness perfectly suited to his imagination and points out that he "wanted something surreal where it would seem normal that people sing to each other. What better setting for that than Mary's dream world?"⁶⁸⁴

To portray the non-linear progression of the narrative and enhance its fluidity, MacDonald employs a "continuous" musical style so that "one scene leads directly into the next" with "convincing and seamless" transitions.⁶⁸⁵ For example, Mary's aria, "The Blades of Grass" ends with a recitative that leaves the aria feeling slightly inconclusive yet allows it to blend continuously into the next scene (refer to Section 8.4.2).⁶⁸⁶ In terms of his musical style, MacDonald describes it as "new-sounding, but the tunes are memorable [...] I'm not afraid of melody, but there's angularity, too. It's more like Wagner maybe, or Britten."⁶⁸⁷ In Mary's aria, MacDonald contrasts angular melodies in the first part of the aria with more lyrical ones in the second part.⁶⁸⁸ He also employs the use of musical themes throughout the opera to give insight into what the characters think and feel.⁶⁸⁹ In the final scene of the opera, MacDonald recapitulates a snippet of Mary's aria as Charlie bids her a final farewell

⁶⁸³ Andrew Paul MacDonald, "Some Thoughts on *Mary's Wedding*," Pacific Opera Victoria: *Mary's Wedding* 2011 World Première, 2011, accessed 25 August 2016, <http://www.pov.bc.ca/mwedding-notes.html>.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., and Kevin Bazzana, "POV Brings it all Together for *Mary's Wedding*," *Times Colonist*, 12 November 2011, accessed 25 September 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/903820995?accountid=14656>.

⁶⁸⁶ Andrew Paul MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass," aria adaptation, n.p., 2012, copy obtained from the composer, mm. 94-107.

⁶⁸⁷ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 15.

⁶⁸⁸ Refer to MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass," angular melodic style (mm. 13-64) and lyrical melodic style (mm. 65-93). Refer to the discussion in Section 8.4.2.

⁶⁸⁹ Andrew Paul MacDonald, Interview with author, 14 October 2016.

and goes to take a ride in the fields. The appearance of Mary's aria at this moment reflects Charlie's thoughts as he recalls the day he met Mary and their first ride together.⁶⁹⁰

As previously mentioned, MacDonald and Massicotte added the separate role of Flowerdew into the opera in order to have "three distinct musical voices [...] for reasons of musical variety and to connect them through shared musical material."⁶⁹¹ To enhance the drama, they also added a chorus to comment and fill out the action. Now the characters mentioned in the play "could have a voice. [...] the townspeople, workmen, mothers and children, tea party guests and, of course, the soldiers all come to life through the chorus."⁶⁹²

8.2 List of Characters and Premiere Cast

The following cast list is from the Pacific Opera Victoria's production of *Mary's Wedding* that premiered on 10 November 2011.⁶⁹³

Mary Chalmers (Soprano)	Betty Wayne Allison
Charlie Edwards (Tenor)	Thomas Macleay
Gordon Muriel Flowerdew or Flowers (Bass)	Alain Coulombe
Conductor	Timothy Vernon
Director	Michael Shamata

⁶⁹⁰ Refer to MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass," mm. 12-14 and the accompanimental style in mm. 13-66. These measures are quoted in Andrew Paul MacDonald and Stephen Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, n.p., May 2011, copy obtained from Pacific Opera Victoria, 260-261 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 162-169).

⁶⁹¹ Andrew Paul MacDonald, "Some Thoughts on *Mary's Wedding*."

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ The following cast list has been gathered from Jackie Adamthwaite, "Cast and Creative Team," *Study Guide and Student Activity Guide for Pacific Opera Victoria's World Première Production of Mary's Wedding*, November 2011, 5, accessed 26 August 2016, http://www.pov.bc.ca/pdfs/marys_wedding_study_activity_guide.pdf.

8.3 Opera Synopsis

Set during WWI, *Mary's Wedding* integrates the real-life historical figure of Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew (1885-1918), who led the Royal Canadians' C Squadron of the Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment.⁶⁹⁴ In January 1918, after three years of stalemate due to industrialized trench warfare, Moreuil Wood served as the last natural barrier against the Germans in their attempt to invade France.⁶⁹⁵ In the Battle of Moreuil Wood, Flowerdew and his men charged against the German's machine guns. Flowerdew and about seventy percent of his squadron did not survive; however, their efforts helped the Allied forces expel the Germans from Moreuil Wood. Flowerdew was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross "For most conspicuous bravery and dash when in command of a squadron detailed for special service of a very important nature."⁶⁹⁶

The opera takes place in Mary's dreams, the night before her wedding. Because of this dream landscape, "time is fluid" and scenes shift back and forth between the past and present, dream and reality, and from a quaint Saskatchewan town to the shell-rained trenches of war.⁶⁹⁷ In the prologue, Flowerdew and the chorus explain this setting to the

⁶⁹⁴ The following information regarding Gordon Muriel Flowerdew and the Battle of Moreuil Wood have been gathered from Caitlin Kunkel, "Dramaturgy Research Packet Rivendell Theatre Ensemble's Production of *Mary's Wedding*," 7 December 2009, accessed 26 August 2016, http://rivendelltheatre.org/_userfiles/file/Mary%27s%20Wedding/marysweddingdramaturgy.pdf; and William Rawling, "Flowerdew, Gordon Muriel," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed 22 August 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/flowerdew_gordon_muriel_14E.html.

⁶⁹⁵ Refer to Kunkel, "Dramaturgy Research Packet Rivendell Theatre Ensemble's Production of *Mary's Wedding*," 3-4 for a chronological list of major WWI events and highlights those that are referred to in the *Mary's Wedding*.

⁶⁹⁶ "Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew," Canadian Virtual War Memorial, in *Government of Canada: Veterans Affairs Canada*, last modified 06 April 2016, accessed 26 August 2016, <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/38211>.

⁶⁹⁷ Miller, "New Productions New Roles," 15.

audience: “Tonight is just a dream. [...] It begins at the end and ends at the start. There are sad parts, but don’t let that stop you from dreaming it too.”⁶⁹⁸

Mary’s Wedding focuses on themes of love, loss, and remembrance. Massicotte reminds the audience to reflect on these themes:

We are living out histories and plays of our own – operas – of our own. [...] Love and life go on, the struggle for peace and goodness goes on. Hope goes on. It was going on before you arrived and will be going on after you leave. Add a few good lines to that play. Or if you're musically inclined ... add a bar or two.⁶⁹⁹

Act 1, Scene 1: In country field near a barn, Mary appears in her nightgown and describes her recurring dream where Charlie and his horse look up at the sky, counting aloud as a storm approaches.⁷⁰⁰ She always tries to warn them to run but they never hear her. Right before she wakes, Charlie mouths something to her that she cannot make out.

Thunder strikes and the scene shifts to when Mary first meets Charlie. They hide from the thunderstorm in a barn where Charlie counts off the “thousands” between the flashes of lightning and the booms of thunder. Charlie’s fear grows as he realizes how close the lightning approaches but Mary calms him down by teaching him to recite poetry to distract his mind. Together they recite his favourite poem, Lord Alfred Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Lightning Brigade” (1854). Once the storm passes, Charlie gives her a ride home on his horse. As they speed along, Mary wonders if her heart is pounding from fear of riding or from the exhilaration of sitting so closely to Charlie.

⁶⁹⁸ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score, 7-9 (Overture-Prologue: mm. 122-139).

⁶⁹⁹ Massicotte, “Notes from the Librettist.”

⁷⁰⁰ The following synopsis has been gathered from MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score.

Act 1, Scene 2: At a port in Montreal, Mary imagines herself with the cheering crowd as she waves goodbye to Charlie and the other soldiers. In reality, she never went to see him depart because she was too angry with him for enlisting.

Act 1, Scene 3: Charlie writes a letter to Mary while aboard a ship crossing the Atlantic. He chats with his mentor, Sergeant Flowerdew and tells him about Mary.

Act 1, Scene 4: Mary dreams of when she and Charlie awkwardly see each other again after being stuck in the thunderstorm. She invites him to her house to attend her mother's Saturday Tea. As she goes to leave, she drops a letter and Charlie picks it up for her. They read it together and the scene shifts again.

Charlie has arrived in England and has met King George V. In his letter to Mary, he tells her that the King has asked the Canadian troops to go to Ypres to replace the men killed by chlorine gas – the first time this type of weaponry had been used in warfare.

Act 1, Scene 5: At the tea, Mary makes sure everything goes according to her mother's plans. Charlie arrives all dressed up and has even combed his hair. Mary tries to flatten down some bits of his hair that stick up but stops when her disapproving mother acts like she has her "pants-in-a-knot" flapping around like an old hen!"⁷⁰¹ Mary runs to help her mother but tells Charlie to stay put. It starts to rain.

The rain turns to bullets flying from the sky on Charlie's first night at the front. Flowerdew yells at him to stay put. To calm his fears, Charlie counts the "thousands" between explosions. A blast throws him in the air.

Back at the party, Mary comes to Charlie's rescue with an umbrella. Together they stand in the rain and reveal how much they had both enjoyed riding the horse together.

⁷⁰¹ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, 100 (Act 1, Scene 5: mm. 127-128).

Act 1, Scene 6: Charlie tries to write a letter to Mary in the trenches but cannot come up with anything to write. He has volunteered to go over the trench with the Fifth Battalion and Flowerdew tries to convince him to stay because in “A week of battle, twelve thousand men gone and not one mile gained.”⁷⁰² However, Charlie wants to do his share so Flowerdew gives him some advice: “Stay with me Charlie [...] Don’t stop for anything!”⁷⁰³

Act 1, Scene 7: In Festubert, Charlie writes Mary a letter as he and the soldiers await the signal to leap out of the trenches into “No Man’s Land.”⁷⁰⁴ The Germans begin firing at them with their machine guns. Two lines of men go up and get slaughtered. In the third line with Charlie, Flowerdew orders his men to “Forget about the spacing, the even lines! Run all the way!”⁷⁰⁵ Flowerdew and Charlie survive the night and describe the horror: “We ran through the dead and wounded. Strewn like old blankets. Heaped on top of each other. Grabbing at our legs as we ran by them.”⁷⁰⁶

Act 2, Scene 1: Charlie teaches Mary how to ride a horse. They kiss.

Act 2, Scene 2: As they relax in the barn, Marie asks Charlie, “What’s the worst thing you’ve ever done?” She instantly wants to take back the question because now she has to tell him what he wrote her in a letter today: a German soldier had tried to sneak across the line and Charlie killed him.

Act 2, Scene 3: Mary reads another letter from Charlie. On break from trench duty, he rests in a barn and dreams of her. The dream shifts back to the past to when Mary tells Charlie about her favourite poem, Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” (1833, 1842) and how

⁷⁰² MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score, 118-119 (Act 1, Scene 6: mm. 41-47).

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 121-122 (Act 1, Scene 6: mm. 85-86 and 98-99).

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 137-138 (Act 1, Scene 7: mm. 118-120).

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 139-141 (Act 1, Scene 7: mm. 130-141).

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 142-143 (Act 1, Scene 7: mm. 147-154).

the lady dies of heartbreak. Charlie tells Mary how he knows her mother disapproves of him. Mary insists that she does not care but Charlie leaves anyways because he loves her. He goes to work on his father's farm and tries to forget about her.

Act 2, Scene 4: Flowerdew sees Charlie hard at work moving sandbags on the trench in addition to taking up patrols in "No Man's Land" at night. He reprimands him for overworking and refuses to let him go on patrols even though Charlie says he must do it: "I want to work to forget."⁷⁰⁷ Traumatized by the war, Charlie has finally realized that he will "never get home" for "Death is in the charge."⁷⁰⁸ Flowerdew reassures Charlie that he will get him home and tries to keep him out of the patrol for as long as he can. Finally, Charlie has to take his turn again and gets wounded on the patrol. His men drag him back to the safety of the trench as his blood leaves a trail of red in the snow.

Act 2, Scene 5: The town rustles with excitement over the news that a war might soon begin. Charlie approaches Mary after weeks of ignoring her. She angrily reproaches him for his neglect and he says, "I thought you might wake up and find someone a bit better suited for you."⁷⁰⁹ She tells him again that she does not care about her mother's opinion.

The dream shifts and Mary reads a letter from Charlie in which he tells her that he has been wounded. Again, the dream shifts. Flowerdew visits Charlie as he recovers in the hospital to tell him that they no longer have to do infantry duty. Now that Flowerdew has been promoted to Lieutenant of the C Squadron, they will get their horses back. Together the men race off on their horses, the dream shifts, and now Mary races along with Charlie.

⁷⁰⁷ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, 179 (Act 2, Scene 4: mm. 43-44).

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 180-181 (Act 2, Scene 4: mm. 53-56). Here, the word "charge" refers to the warfare maneuver in which horses would "charge" through enemy lines.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 191-192 (Act 2, Scene 5: mm. 41-46).

Act 2, Scene 6: Charlie tells Mary that Germany has declared war on Britain. She tries to convince him not to enlist but he tells her that he wants to charge like the men in “Charge of the Light Brigade.” He asks her to meet with him in the barn because he wants to ask her something. Angry that he has chosen to enlist, Mary refuses and tells him to go away.

Act 2, Scene 7: At the Battle of Moreuil Wood, Flowerdew leads his men in a cavalry charge against the Germans in the forest. The Germans are waiting for them in two lines with fixed bayonets and a canon. Charlie survives the battle as the only man to make it past both lines. Flowerdew gets fatally wounded and as he dies, he tells Charlie to write the truth to Mary.

Act 2, Scene 8: Alone in a barn, Charlie reads his last letter to Mary. In it, he tells her that he wants to return home to her and that he will love her and make her happy. Time shifts. Although she never went in real-life, in her dreams, Mary goes to see Charlie in the barn. He promises to write and they talk about their future together, about getting married and having children. Mary breaks down and she tells Charlie that she never received any more letters from him after Moreuil Wood because a German plane shot him down in a field with his horse. She tells him how she nearly died from heartache and how she regrets not coming to see him this night in the barn. She can never forget him and he tells her not to, and instead to, “let me be in everything. Just a little bit less.”⁷¹⁰ They say goodbye to each other and Charlie tells her what he tried to tell her in the beginning of the dream, “Wake up, Mary.”⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, 257-258 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 126-129).

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, 274 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 225-226).

8.4 “The Blades of Grass”

8.4.1 Aria Description

Voice Type: The role of Mary would suit light to full lyric soprano who feel comfortable singing in the upper *passaggio* as the aria tends to sit quite high. MacDonald wrote the role of Mary with the intention that a wide range of lyric voices could sing it as long as they have a “youthful” quality to their voice and the strength to represent the “forceful part of [Mary’s] character.”⁷¹² The whole role presents quite a challenge and requires great stamina as Mary rarely leaves the stage.

Range: D4-B5

Character: Since Mary could not say goodbye to Charlie in real-life, her dream allows her to finally accept his passing. As Anne Nothoff remarks: “Remembering their love is [Mary’s] way of saying goodbye” and her dream “shows how memory informs the present, and how it becomes a means of survival.”⁷¹³ One of the challenges in portraying Mary is to understand when she acts as Mary, “the narrator” describing the dream and when she embodies Mary, “the character” in her dream. In MacDonald’s opinion, “Mary is always recounting the story.”⁷¹⁴ However many times throughout the opera, she simultaneously becomes both narrator and character. As MacDonald says: “She’s the narrator but when she’s talking about herself, she sees herself from the outside and then she’s inside herself [...] It’s so internalized and objective, and at the same time very emotive.”⁷¹⁵ The difficulty then arises in determining which emotions to portray at what

⁷¹² MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷¹³ Anne Nothof, “Stephen Massicotte,” Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia, last modified 11 November 2011, accessed 21 August 2016, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Massicotte%2C%20Stephen>.

⁷¹⁴ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

times for “Mary the narrator” knows the outcome of events and that Charlie dies, but “Mary the character” does not. These interpretative decisions become especially pertinent at the end of “The Blades of Grass” (refer to the discussion of Part 2 in Section 8.4.2).

When Mary first meets Charlie, the two are probably in their late teens.⁷¹⁶ On the other hand, “Mary the narrator” is probably in her mid-twenties since the dream takes place “two years after the great war.”⁷¹⁷ “Mary the character” recently emigrated from England and – according to her mother, “to live with the colonists in the wilds of the Canadas.”⁷¹⁸ By Mary’s description, her mother often thinks of herself and her daughter as above the other colonists in Canada. Mary has also had a privileged upbringing, evident in her ballet and piano training.⁷¹⁹

MacDonald summarizes his view of Mary’s personality: “There’s a kindness about her, she’s never really cold and she’s very firm in her convictions [...] She does have a defiance about her as well, she can get angry.”⁷²⁰ Despite her initial timidity towards Charlie, Mary also demonstrates a bold independence. For example, she disobeys her mother in order to be with Charlie (Act 2, Scene 1) and she gets upset at Charlie for joining the war because she cares so deeply for his well-being (Act 2, Scene 6).

Throughout the opera, “Mary the character” transforms and develops through her relationship with Charlie. MacDonald points out that “she’s rather timid and naïve but becomes more worldly as Charlie actually becomes more worldly.”⁷²¹ Together, Mary and Charlie face their fears, overcoming them with the help of the other: “The fields, the sky, the

⁷¹⁶ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., and MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score, 7 (Prologue: 118-119).

⁷¹⁸ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score, 24 (Act 1, Scene 1: mm. 174-176).

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 150 (Act 2, Scene 1: m. 37).

⁷²⁰ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

horse, the air... or could it be something else [that] makes scary so good? Or is it you?"⁷²²

As MacDonald describes, "at first, Mary is infatuated with him and this turns to deeper love as their relationship develops."⁷²³ The libretto does not clearly indicate how much time Mary and Charlie actually spend together before he enlists. MacDonald points out: "It doesn't seem like much time but it's enough to ignite the flame which then turns into quite a large bonfire."⁷²⁴

Initially, Mary and Charlie struggle to admit their attraction to one another. Charlie then battles with himself because, despite Mary's defiance against her mother, he feels that he is not good enough for her. Angry that he enlisted, Mary then refuses to meet Charlie in the barn the night before he departs even though he most likely intended to propose to her. To Mary, not going to meet Charlie that night becomes her greatest regret as she says to him in her dream: "I'm sorry I never came to see you in the barn. And I'm sorry I never stopped you from going. It's the worst thing I ever did."⁷²⁵

Charlie went to war for the glory and the thrill he had read about in Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade." He realized too late that the thrill of the ride came not from charging on the horse but from being on the horse with Mary. Mary and Charlie never say "I love you" directly to each other until the end of the opera when they both finally accept his death and say goodbye.⁷²⁶

Setting: (Act 1, Scene 1) As the thunderstorm fades away, Mary realizes that she has run very late and her mother will be worried and upset at her. Charlie offers to give her a

⁷²² MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, 155-156 (Act 2, Scene 1: mm. 83-95).

⁷²³ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, vocal score, 256-257 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 112-121).

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 259 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 149-150).

ride home on his horse. She apprehensively accepts the ride and they race off through the countryside together.

Aria 11: "The Blades of Grass"⁷²⁷

Characters

Mary Chalmers, a young lady recently arrived in Canada from England soprano
Charlie Edwards, a rugged Canadian farm boy tenor
Gordon Muriel Flowerdew ("Flowers"), a sergeant promoted to lieutenant
of Lord Strathcona's Horse bass

Canadian townspeople, workmen, Mary's mother, soldiers, an officer, wedding guests

Scene: at the time of the Great War, both in rural Canada and overseas

Mary's Wedding was commissioned by Pacific Opera Victoria for a World Premiere at the McPherson Playhouse in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada on November 10, 2011 with the following Cast and Creative Team:

Mary Chalmers Betty Wayne Allison
Charlie Edwards Thomas Macleay
Sergeant Flowerdew Alain Coulombe

with the Pacific Opera Victoria Chorus and the Victoria Symphony
Artistic Director and Conductor: Timothy Vernon
Director: Michael Shamata
Designer: Ian Rye
Music Copyist: Eleanor Gang

Orchestra

2 Flutes (2nd doubles on Piccolo)	2 Trumpets
2 Oboes (2nd doubles on English Horn)	Trombone (with F attachment)
2 Clarinets (2nd doubles on Bass Clarinet)	Timpani
2 Bassoons	Percussion (2)
2 Horns	Strings

Thanks to the following for their support of the commissioning of Mary's Wedding:



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The Koerner Foundation

Michael F. Morres

Production Patron of the Premiere

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NRS Foundation



VICTORIA FOUNDATION

vancouver
foundation

Joe & Linda Harvey

Larry Ryan

In Memory of Con and Alice Ryan

⁷²⁷ MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass." The following aria adaptation has been included with copyright permission from the composer.

The Blades Of Grass

libretto by Stephen Massicotte

Mary's Wedding
Act I, Sc. 1

Andrew Paul MacDonald
Op. 78

Broadly $\text{♩} = 72$ *riten.* *a tempo*
mp

Mary

Char-lie chan-ges as he

Piano

f *p* muted brass

4

puts his foot in-to the stir-rup and pulls him-self up. He is now ten feet tall a-

f *allargando*

7

bove me.

♩ = 54 *riten.*

Ob.

p

9 *p* (*parlando*) 5 $\text{♩} = 54$

In the sad-dle I can do no-thing but move clo-ser to him.

12 **13** *molto ritenuto* Subito allegro con spirito $\text{♩} = 152$ *p*

The blades of

16

grass blend to - ge-ther and blur. The fence posts smudge as they

20

rise up and pass. A bird flies a -

24

cross our path. His wings flicker three times and he sud-den-ly - sails, ___

27

flicker three times and we fly by him. The eve-ning

Fls. & Cls.

cresc.

30

air turns to wind. Our hooves thun-der and

Vlns.

f

33

pound and splash, thun-der and splash and drum on the wood of the bridge.

Vc.

36 *p*

We cross the bridge like a rum - bling thun - der. Then

Vla.

Hn.

39 *riten.* 41 *Meno mosso* ♩ = 108 *mf*

splash on the o - ther side. Is it fear I am feel - ing? — The

p winds & pizz.

Stgs.

Hn.

43 *accel.* ----- *a tempo* ♩ = 152 *p*

speed, the noise? Breath - - - - ing and

Fls. & Cls.

Hn.

Stgs.

f

p

46 *cresc.*

thun - der - ing, with this boy so strong and fear - less now,

cresc. Vls.

49 *f* *p* 53

bo - dy to bo - dy be - side me? Now I know what I'm

Vls.

f *p* Vla. Vc.

54 *f* *allarg.*

feel - ing - I'm not feel - ing fear at all... My feet are car - ry - ing me as

f

58 61 *p*

slow - ly as a snail up the thir - ty stones to my mo - ther's front door... But my

subito $\text{♩} = 152$

Trb. L.H. Vins. Vc.

62 *mf*

heart is still brea - thing and thun - der - ing as fast as a charge.

mf

65 *rall.* ----- *molto* 67 **Meno mosso** ♩ = 92
p espr.

fantastico That night I dreamed on - ly of

tutti f mf p

69 Char - lie. I hear church bells. I dream of

Fls. cresc. Fls. cresc.

73 white dress - es, flo - wers and ma - ny kiss - es,

76 *f* and Char-lie is there for all of it! *p* I see him with hor - ses.

f p

* Leo

MacDonald—Op. 78—The Blades of Grass

80 *cresc.* *poco f* *p*

I see him run - ning with them, rid - ing — in fields, in fo - rests, in eve - nings and in

* Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo.

84 *cresc.* *f*

morn - ings. I see him ri - ding and smi - ling, down to the

* Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo.

88

sea.

* Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo. * Leo.

94 Più mosso ♩ = 120
recit. p (parlando)

92

I see him on an o-ccean li-ner. The war is on and the Ca-

p pizz.

97

na - di - ans are sail - ing for Eng - land, then France and be - fore long, —

101

the heart _____ of Ger - ma - ny.

Fls. & Trps.

mf *f* *p*

105

8.4.2 Performance and Interpretive Notes

This through-composed aria divides into two main parts. In Part 1 (mm. 13-66), the music's angular melody and dotted-eighth note accompaniment portray Mary as she rides with Charlie on his horse. In Part 2 (mm. 65-93), the music becomes more tuneful and lyrical as Mary dreams of her wedding and her love for Charlie. In addition, Part 1 also divides into three sub-sections, which delineate the changes in Mary's attitude towards Charlie: Part 1A (mm. 13-41), Part 1B (mm. 39-52), and Part 1C (mm. 52-66). The aria also begins with an Introduction (mm. 1-12) and closes with a Recitative (mm. 94-106).

At the beginning of the Introduction (mm. 1-8), Mary marvels at how Charlie transforms as he mounts his horse. He grows from "this boy that was terrified and hiding" into a courageous man, "fearless and flying."⁷²⁸ In her recitative passage in m. 9, Mary seems to shift from the narrator to embodying "Mary the character." MacDonald describes her feelings in this moment: "She's anxious in a flutter of infatuation and she's submissive to his command."⁷²⁹ Singers should portray Mary's apprehension at riding a horse for the first time and being so close to Charlie with whom she does not know how to feel or act.

Throughout Part 1, MacDonald uses similar musical material that features a more "angular" melodic style discussed previously and a "galloping," dotted eighth-note accompaniment (discussed below). The three subdivisions portray Mary's changing feelings towards Charlie as they progress from timid excitement (1A), questioning (1B), to

⁷²⁸ Stephen Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2002), 11.

⁷²⁹ MacDonald, Interview with author.

conviction and affirmation (1C).⁷³⁰ As MacDonald points out, “Things happen quickly in the opera in terms of their relationship, this aria shows that.”⁷³¹

In Part 1A (mm. 13-41), Mary sits atop the horse with Charlie as they rush through the forest. Here the *piano* dynamic and “spirited” fast tempo suggest a sense of scintillating and breathless excitement. MacDonald also points out that Mary is “literally being swept off her feet.”⁷³² (Singers should maintain the soft dynamic until the indicated *crescendo* in m. 29.) Performers should strive to follow MacDonald’s tempi markings within the aria.⁷³³ To maintain the fast tempo (♩ = 152), singers may find it helpful to sing this section lightly as indicated by the soft dynamics and to use the consonants to get the words out quickly and clearly.

Mary describes a bird that flies past them and whose wings “flicker three times.”⁷³⁴ In the libretto, it appears several times and MacDonald interprets it as symbolizing a return to nature as this carries great significance to Charlie, especially amidst the destruction of war.⁷³⁵

The accompaniment’s incessant dotted rhythms evoke the horse’s galloping and was inspired by MacDonald’s own violin piece, “The Great Square of Pegasus” (1997).⁷³⁶ The sixteenth notes in mm. 28-29 and 30-31 portray the “wind and blurred scenes rushing by.”⁷³⁷ Mary’s vocal line adds to portrayal of the horse’s heavy hooves with accents and

⁷³⁰ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Although the tempi for “The Blades of Grass” in the CBC recording of Pacific Opera Victoria’s production of *Mary’s Wedding* were taken at a much slower tempo, the composer wishes singers to adhere to the given tempo markings. Recording obtained from the composer.

⁷³⁴ MacDonald, “The Blades of Grass,” mm. 25-27.

⁷³⁵ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

tenuto markings in mm. 32-35. At m. 35, the accompaniment suddenly stops (Ex. 94).

MacDonald explains that the external noise of the horse's hooves "drum[ming] on the wood of the bridge" interrupts Mary's thoughts, causing her to begin questioning her own infatuations.⁷³⁸ This leads into Part 1B where she asks herself: "Is it fear I am feeling?"⁷³⁹

One of the more challenging aspects of the aria is coordinating the various tempi changes without a conductor, especially in mm. 40-45. Here, pianists should take control of establishing the new *meno mosso* tempo (m. 41, ♩ = 108) with the *ritenuto* in m. 40, while singers take responsibility of establishing the *a tempo* (m. 45, ♩ = 152) with the *accelerando* (m. 43) on "the speed, the noise." The accompaniment returns with the horse's dotted eighth-note gallops and the thundering of its hooves portrayed by the piano's right hand chords (mm. 46-48).

In this new section (Part 1B, mm. 39-52), Mary tries to figure out whether she feels fear from speeding away on a horse for the first time or exhilaration from sitting so close to Charlie. With her words, "body to body beside me" (mm. 49-51), the accents on the vocal line seem to portray Mary's sexual awakening and her realization of her affection towards Charlie. Singers should either keep this phrase in tempo or add a very slight *rubato*, giving great weight and emphasis on each note (Ex. 95).

By Part 1C (mm. 52-66), Mary understands her emotions as she says in the play: "I finally know that what I'm feeling is not fear but something new [...] something entirely different."⁷⁴⁰ As indicated by the dynamics and the staccatti, singers should sing mm. 52-56 in an almost breathless and excited manner. MacDonald describes how Mary is "timid at

⁷³⁸ MacDonald, Interview with author; and MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass," m. 35.

⁷³⁹ MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass," mm. 41-43.

⁷⁴⁰ Massicotte, *Mary's Wedding*, 11.

first and then grows in confidence [...] she's excited and exhilarated at these new emotions."⁷⁴¹

At mm. 57-61, Mary heads home to her mother with great reluctance at having to leave Charlie. MacDonald musically portrays her procrastination by slowing down and pausing in m. 60. Singers and pianists may find this tempo change challenging to coordinate and may find it helpful to view the *allargando* as occurring more on beat 4 of m. 57 so that singers may control the change.⁷⁴² Singers should exaggerate Mary's dislike of returning home by accentuating the alliteration of the words "slowly," "snail," and "stones." Between mm. 60 and 61, singers should take a pause and use their breath to bring in the accompaniment and initiate the *subito* return to ♩ = 152 (Ex. 96). The accompaniment then returns to its simulation of the galloping horse (mm. 61-64) as Mary recalls the exhilaration of her ride.

The *rallentando* in the accompaniment (mm. 65-67) leads us into the *meno mosso* tempo of Part 2 (mm. 65-93, ♩ = 92). Here, calming arpeggiated progressions replace the horse's gallops and the music takes on a romantic, lyric quality as Mary dreams of Charlie and her wedding. The vocal line and accompaniment appear in a quasi-canon in which the accompaniment echoes snatches of the vocal melody in close succession (Ex. 97). This creates a beautiful effect as well as a deceptively challenging passage for singers. Here, the singer's notes often lie beneath the accompaniment making it tricky to cut through the accompanying texture and to find initial pitches. In Part 2, singers should ensure to find a focused, forward tone when singing notes in the lower register. In regards to the higher notes atop the melody's arching phrases, singers should move quickly off consonants to

⁷⁴¹ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

slightly modified, taller vowels (Ex. 98). As Mary is British, singers should use a more “British” pronunciation for the role; these taller vowels will help make the high tessitura passages easier to sing.

Mary alludes to her wedding with “church bells,” “white dresses, flowers and many kisses.”⁷⁴³ She also dreams of Charlie being there “for all of it” and “riding in fields, in forests, in evenings and in mornings.”⁷⁴⁴ Although it may seem like Mary is simply dreaming of marrying Charlie someday, these words also foreshadows the end of the opera in which Charlie has died and Mary must say goodbye to him and marry her new love. Instead of standing beside her at the altar, Charlie remains with her in spirit and she imagines him going off to “take a ride in the fields.”⁷⁴⁵ In the play version of *Mary’s Wedding*, Mary ends with a final monologue that brings back many of the words used in this aria and underscores their foreshadowing role:

And that’s the end of the dream. It begin at the end and ends at the beginning. Like before, Charlie rides away thinking of me, only this time he doesn’t go away. This time there is no more war. This time he rides off into the fields. When I awake, the day, my dress, and my husband are waiting. It’s a July wedding on a Saturday morning in Nineteen Hundred and Twenty. I still think of him. I see him on horses. I see him running with them, in dreams, in waking, in forests, in evenings and in mornings. I hear him laughing and riding swiftly through the fields. I hear him in church bells. I see white dresses, flowers and little babies and Charlie is there in all of it. Only, now a little less. Only, now a little bit less. And that will be enough. Goodbye Charlie.”⁷⁴⁶

As mentioned earlier, deciding whether Mary acts as the narrator or as the character can dramatically effect the emotional interpretation of a passage. In this instance, MacDonald suggests that singers play “Mary the character,” oblivious to Charlie’s death.

⁷⁴³ MacDonald, “The Blades of Grass,” mm. 71 and 73-75.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., mm. 77 and 81-84.

⁷⁴⁵ MacDonald and Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, vocal score, 260-261 (Act 2, Scene 8: mm. 164-166).

⁷⁴⁶ Massicotte, *Mary’s Wedding*, 65-66.

Singers should not sing this passage with any sadness but “with a joyful anticipation of spending [their] life with Charlie.”⁷⁴⁷

The long held D5 (mm. 88-91) should not fade out but rather remain *forte* or *crescendo*. If singers feel they do not have enough breath, they can optionally shorten the note to end on the downbeat of m. 90. The accompaniment should remain steady and not *accelerando*.⁷⁴⁸ MacDonald describes the accompaniment here as having the weight and grandeur of the sea to lead us into the next section where Mary describes the “ocean liners.”⁷⁴⁹

Singers may interpret the recitative (mm. 94-106) in two ways. They can approach the opening part of the recitative (mm. 94-101) as if narrating and describe the situation strictly in tempo and in a militaristic style. In another approach, singers may perform the whole recitative as “Mary the character” with a slightly freer tempo and trepidation in the voice. Regardless of which interpretation singers choose, they should sing the final phrase as “Mary the character” and express intense fear and anxiety. Throughout the recitative, the accompanying chords should fall in tempo and sound like “gun shots.”⁷⁵⁰ For the aria adaptation, MacDonald based the piano postlude off the snare drum’s militaristic rhythm.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁷ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ MacDonald, “The Blades of Grass,” m. 95.

⁷⁵⁰ MacDonald, Interview with author.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

Ex. 94 Interruption of Mary's thoughts by the galloping horse, mm. 34-36.⁷⁵²

thun-der and splash and drum on the wood of the bridge.

Galloping Horse with its Thundering Hooves

Galloping Horse

Vla.

Vc.

Interruption of Mary's Thoughts

Ex. 95 "Body to body beside me?" mm. 49-51.

bo - dy to bo - dy be - side me?

f

f

Ex. 96 Suggested pause and breath, mm. 59-61.

thir - ty stones_ to my mo - ther's front door... But my

$\text{♩} = 72$

subito $\text{♩} = 152$

p

L.H.

Vins.

Vc.

⁷⁵² The following musical examples have been excerpted from MacDonald, "The Blades of Grass."

Ex. 97 Canon between voice and piano, mm. 80-83.

cresc.
I see him run-ning with them *poco f* rid - ing in fields, in fo-rests, *p*

cresc. *poco f* *p*

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped.

Ex. 98 Suggested diction, mm. 76-77.

f
and Char-lie is there for all of it!
[ɛ] [fo:] [ɔ:l]

f

* Ped. * Ped.

9. CONCLUSION

Due to a lack of documentation and many social and economic variables, it is difficult to determine if a correlation exists between the use of operatic aria anthologies and an increase in performance of these arias and the production of their operas. However, as previously mentioned, Richard Walters' observations regarding an increased performance of the arias within the *American Aria Anthology* series is promising. Future research into this correlation may help stimulate interest in the creation of Canadian opera aria anthologies for other voice types (mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, and bass), which will open up a diverse new repertoire for many singers.

Linda and Michael Hutcheon suggest that Canadian operas reflect Canadian society and although they differ stylistically, "they are united by a continuing common concern for the issues of identity."⁷⁵³ As Mary Ingraham points out, the genre as a whole serves as an "important Canadian cultural artifact."⁷⁵⁴ Singers, opera companies, and audiences should support the creation and nurture the development of Canadian opera. As librettist, John Murrell puts it:

It is, as they say, a big job, but somebody has to do it – otherwise, opera will live only in the past. Of course, opera's past is a fine and seductive thing – but, without a future, it is still a well-kept and fascinating museum, rather than the living, changing, surprising, challenging creature that we currently seek to pursue and embrace, both individually and collectively.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ Linda and Michael Hutcheon, "Opera and National Identity: New Canadian Opera," *Canadian Theatre Review*, no. 96 (Fall 98, 1998): 5, International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance with Full Text, EBSCOhost, accessed 19 January 2017, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ibh&AN=4191400&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁷⁵⁴ Ingraham, "Something to Sing About," 24.

⁷⁵⁵ John Murrell, "Librettist John Murrell on *Lillian Alling*," Vancouver Opera's *Lillian Alling* Blog, posted November 19 2008, accessed 17 February 2017, <http://lillianallingopera.blogspot.ca/2008/11/librettist-john-murrell-on-lillian.html>.

Hopefully the dozen arias within this anthology will not only provide singers with useful pieces for auditions but also give them and their audience a lens through which they may better understand Canadian opera and culture. Ultimately, this “Canadian Opera Aria Anthology for Soprano” aims to increase the recognition of Canadian Opera and to develop a greater interest and appreciation for these works so that one day, they may become a part of the standard operatic repertoire and reach both Canadian and international stages.

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