

The Arts
of
*Song and Accompaniment**

by
Paul Ulanowsky

From the
unfinished manuscript



**See Editor's Note*

Paul Alexander Ulanowsky (1908-1968),
The Arts of Song and Accompaniment

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Editor's Note

This uncompleted work by my father, at long last making its way into the hands of a few of his students and colleagues, has spent an unduly long dormancy on my shelf. I first learned of its existence from Mr. William Scheide, founder and director of the Bach Aria group, on a visit to talk to him about their friendship and work together, over a decade ago. Subsequently, I was given the extant original manuscript by Mrs. Corinne Andreen Marshall, a devoted student and friend of my father, who had carefully made a typescript from it years before, in hopes of finding an interested publisher.

I stress that this presentation is compiled from loose, draft chapters; several pertinent facts should be borne in mind regarding its reading. Notes with the manuscript tend to indicate more intended to be written in at least some of the chapters. The order of the chapters here is arbitrary, with two exceptions, as no written record of intended chapter order exists, if it ever did. The exceptions are the precedence given to the Epilogue, and the following of Program from Concert, as indicated in the text. The book's title also presents a question mark, as I have not come across any manuscript indication of title.

In addition, the extant manuscript in my father's hand, has, regrettably, four fewer chapters than typescript, and so I have no way of completely verifying the authenticity of these four. I mention this because I was advised when first coming upon the book that some who knew my father well and had read the typescript long ago, questioned whether some of the views in these chapters were his. As I was just sixteen in 1968 when my father died, and knew firsthand little of his views on music, there is not much I can say to clarify the issue. However, I should like to offer the following. Although the lack of hand-written manuscript for *Breathing*, *Interpretation*, *Liberties*, and *Rhythm and Ornaments* remains an unsolved mystery, the typescript for them has the same sort of working notation as for other chapters – e.g., bracketed insertions mid-page, in the middle of sentences, indicating the start of a new manuscript page – and these chapters appear no more or less finished than the others with respect to blanks, etc. The shortest, *Breathing*, includes a note by Mrs. Marshall, questioning if pages were missing. I do, furthermore, have many handwritten pages of notes of my father's, some evidently for the book, others for master classes or lectures, which include notes for discussion of, for example, French song interpretation, that seem to me to be coherent with the book in general and some of its particular references. I have not read through all of the notes; they may hold the basis for a more informed judgment. Oth-

erwise, as far as I can see, the distinctive style of writing pervades the chapters presented here.

However matters may be, I have made scarcely a change from the original manuscript or typescript, even where commas seem clearly called for. Where two choices of word or phrase were left, I have included both, separated with a slash and put in italics. Otherwise, I have used brackets in a standard manner, and identified my own additions with my initials. Again, let the reader understand these chapters for what they are, work in draft form when their author died. In sharing them with former students and colleagues of his, I hope to spark memories of his quality of playing and teaching, and his qualities as a human being, that they may be passed on to new generations of students discovering the splendor and reward of beautiful music today. As full of Viennese charm as the writing often is, there lie within these pages gems of wisdom pertinent to life in general as well as to life in music, some stated plainly, others quietly nestled in the midst of a paragraph, waiting to be discovered by the thoughtful reader. They offer us an insight informed by a rich scholarly and intimate knowledge of music and its history, from one whose personal experience through family and acquaintance reached back well into the 19th Century. It is, I believe, knowledge invaluable for today.

I would like to express my special thanks to Corinne Marshall, for her devotion to bringing this work from

manuscript to printed page, and for her encouragement and help to me in carrying it forward to its current state.

Philip Storm Ulanowsky
April 10, 2003



Epilogue

This, dear reader, is not an error in printing or binding—I just thought it would be better to have the epilogue in front where it stands a better chance to catch your eye. In this book I have deliberately stepped on every toe I could think of, major and minor, dead and alive, treating authors, performers and listeners with—I hope—impartial lack of reverence and courtesy. I offer no apology for it, I meant every word—but I should emphasize that I could not have written this book unless from enthusiasm and love for my work as a musician, and from grateful appreciation of all the personal and artistic contacts which it has brought about. To pursue a profession in which practically all activity carries its own reward regardless of public acknowledgment or financial return, is a pursuit of happiness indeed, and it should by rights temper one's inclination to criticism. By the same token however it encourages one to become a perfectionist, especially of that kind whose eye fastens on the notes in everybody else's. In a period and in a field of endeavor where outside pressure more than ever causes many to start a public career too early and to develop and display their assets often according to commercially sound but artistically questionable principles, it is anything but easy for the observer or partner in crime to arrive at reasonable judgment of their efforts. We have to deal with an infinitely, or better indefinitely, flexible set of values—and the only remaining stable criterion would be the proportion of effort and effect to the individual's potential.

Where in my work as coach and accompanist or as a mere listener, I get the impression that the performer gives in every way the best and the most he can muster within his natural limitations, I am satisfied. Others may give more objectively speaking, quite a lot more, yet it doesn't rate as highly where it fails to reach the standard set by their own gifts and accomplishments.

The weighing of such matters, however, I am glad to leave to the legitimate guardians of public opinion and to the vast body of self-appointed critics. Long years of making music with singers and instrumentalists have given me more than enough insight into the multiple personal struggle that is connected with the utterance of each phrase and have added continuously to the respect and affection in which I hold these artists and their work. Many of them had occasion to reprimand me for being chary of praise, a characteristic which I am afraid disgraces also this book. It is my contention that since praise is mostly bestowed so lavishly by doting family and friends, the coach or accompanist fulfills a noble and necessary duty in stressing the balancing reactions. I suspect also that some puritan tendencies have led me to regrettable extremes in this regard, and hereby acknowledge contritely a large posthumous debt of praise wherever I assumed mere absence of criticism to contain it.

To those who thought to search or find familiar faces in the various singer types I mentioned in this book, I apologize for disappointing them — for a variety of reasons, some of which are given in another context, no particular artist is intended to be identified and conjecture shall be left rampant in the reader's mind. As to some

stories and events that have no name attached to them – I believe the most important thing is that they happened, and after that, that they should not have.



*Preface*¹

[List of thanks start with father and mother first to _____ (and get full impact of youthful enthusiasm and perfectionist wrath)]

"I enjoyed your accompaniments — they were so able, so sympathetic." Several times, in different seasons, the same man said the same words to me, as he presumably said them to many colleagues, when he came to the artists' room at the end of a Town Hall recital. His broad smile and enthusiastic handshake left no doubt as to his utter good faith and intentions; the expressions he used for them, were obviously those he had found most frequently applied, and therefore most safely copyable from higher authority. These epithets which appear to rank the services of an accompanist roughly between a shoeshine and a haircut, have long been one of the gentler but no less irksome banes of an accompanist's existence. I firmly believe and hope that further improvements in public understanding and acknowledgement of the accompanist's share will contribute much toward an all-round solution of his problem. A century ago or more it was considered no more than a minor ingredient of every young lady's social graces to be able to strum the accom-

¹ MS unclear: the bracketed note may have been a reminder for a preface that was never written, or an insertion to precede the text included here as Preface, which has no other designated chapter title.

paniment to a ballad on the harp or piano; such terms as the above-quoted which probably covered amply the merits of their endeavors, were retained without much change in hue or stress when piano accompaniments from Schubert on started making greater demands on the skill of the pianist, putting the accompanist on a par with the singer, such as has been his place for a much longer period as a partner, in sonata playing with instrumentalists.

They are incidentally matched by those most frequently applied to the accompanist's work in the concert reviews of my native Vienna, where appraisal more or less alternated between "diskret"² and "*anschmiegsam*", the latter meaning something like "cuddlesomely" and thus fortunately unfit for public use hereabouts — I hope. Close comparison shows that this brace of epithets stems even more patently from the widely spread school of thought that accompanists, too, should be seen but not heard, or nearly so, which leaves at least that much margin of progress in appreciation to be chalked up for our side of the Atlantic.

At the other end of this scale of appreciation stand the well-meaning people who come backstage to praise you, often enough with a knowing wink at the expense of your soloist, and to inform you that there were at least some cognoscenti around that knew an accompanist could "make or break" a singer, than which no sorrier compliment could be made, in my opinion.

² The German word translates to "discreet", not "discrete".

It should be obvious that in a performance of music involving equal responsibility from both participants, opportunities for making and breaking lie equally with both. Let us, however, for the sake of argument, consider the case of an accompanist of considerably superior accomplishments and musicianship, paired with a less distinguished soloist, which happens, of course, just as the opposite does; it has been my experience under the circumstances that an accompanist is about as good as the singer. I would even go so far as to suggest that a conscientious accompanist will not try to be superior beyond a certain degree. With the goal of a well-balanced overall performance in view, it seems to me more desirable that the maturer of the partnership should gauge the general standard of execution so that no blatant discrepancy between individual merits could be noticed. That this wants to be taken with more than a grain of salt, should be obvious. There must always be scope and endeavor for mutual inspiration and carrying away to higher levels of attainment, but *nota bene* only as far as the known limitations of one's partner permit. The sad and definitely unsatisfactory spectacle of one partner's being too busy with his own brilliancy to bother with staying en rapport with the other, must be strictly avoided. If it can be justly said of an accompanist that he stole the show, even without the help of time-honored stage maneuvers and mannerisms in the point of view of higher professional ethics, he has failed. It goes without saying that such strict observance of ethical niceties applies foremost, if not exclusively, to music where teamwork is of first importance. There are enough instances where not the singer or instrumentalist but the accompanist for a change, is invited

by the score to rise and shine, without running the danger of leaving his partner in the lurch.

The ethics of the accompanist's profession seem to be more delicate and difficult of interpretation than those of other musicians whichever way you look. There sits a performer at the piano, in the average easily of an artistic stature comparable to that of the soloist, doing work that is every whit as important as the latter's. Yet with rare exceptions, and those mostly on grounds of fame and authority acquired outside the accompanist's field, to all intents and purposes there exists a wide social, financial, and generally hierarchical gap between soloist and accompanist. I hasten to add that this gap exists by and large more in the public eye than in the relationship between the partners, and that furthermore I have witnessed many instances where artists have gone out of their way to correct this attitude. If I have harped, and should later continue to harp, considerably on such aspects of our profession, it is mainly for this reason: there is an abundance of excellent pianists in this country, with all and more than the equipment required for playing accompaniments. Despite the fact however that there is always a great demand for good accompanists, the profession seems at all times overrun with pianists who prefer the insecurity of a soloist's career, even if they admit they can't reach the crown of Horowitz or Rubinstein. Since the artistic merit and pleasure of playing a lieder or sonata program ranks, in most minds including theirs, with a piano recital, it must be the lack of adequate acknowledgement, inside and outside the profession, that influences their decision. Nor are matters helped much

when such pianists eventually abandon their solo career to take up accompanying as a poor second choice. To them, this is strictly “Ersatz”, and playing with a grudge which they sometimes take little enough care to conceal, they make life bitter for themselves no less than for their employers.



Technique

By and large, the demands of purely technical nature that are made on the accompanist, are below those of the solo pianist, especially in the vocal literature; such exceptions as are to be found there, and all the more difficult parts in the realm of chamber music, will naturally have to undergo the same meticulous treatment of piecemeal analysis and practice that is devoted to independent music of the more virtuoso character. The added task of having to coordinate the results of these labors with those of the partner deprives the pianist to a great extent of the little tempo adjustments he might be tempted to make, in order to grapple more easily and safely with the technical problem on hand. In most cases, however, an agreement with the other executant is arrived at, especially as the latter will have occasion to rely on similar give and take elsewhere — and only where exigencies of breath or bow length, or intrinsic flexibility of time do not permit of the slightest slowing down, the pianist must sweat it out unaided save by his guardian angel and possibly his imaginativeness in revamping a nasty passage to his private requirements. I would here remind the reader that such corrective procedure is not wholly damnable if executed with taste and caution, its justification rests on the highest authority. Schubert, whose Opus 1, the *Erlkönig*, had doubtlessly raised many an outraged protest among contemporary players, saw fit to serve notice on the public in a later opus that care had been taken to omit everything that

was too hard — and ever since then there has been a vast number of composers that have occasionally given the performer ample leeway to adjust the score to their personal liking. As this is entirely a matter between him and the composer, let us then take the technique for granted and let us also, for the sake of the argument, assume that the piano is willing. This latter point is not one to be overlooked on principle, but the intermittent or continuous struggle with the rancor of inanimate matter shall remain outside these considerations.

One word of caution will suffice with regard to the use of pedal. If the elder R. [Anton Rubinstein--ed.] was once heard to say, "The longer I play the more I realize the pedal is the soul of the piano," or something to this extent, the accompanist even more than the solo pianist must beware of playing too soulfully.

Since there is usually not much room for virtuoso display, the accompanist often has enough energy and concentration left for playing from memory. In itself it is an innocent bit of showing off in which I like to indulge just as often as the next accompanist, provided I know the score letterperfect, including cues and text of the vocal part. As the accompanist must be prepared to prompt the singer at any given moment, nothing less than complete knowledge by heart of the score excuses playing from memory. I once heard the story of a baritone who forgot the words to the Toreador song in a concert, so even the oldest chestnut may occasionally be the scene of a lapse which the accompanist must be ready to remedy. But there are more cogent reasons for the playing without music: pieces bristling with technical difficulties which

keep the player's eyes constantly on the keyboard and pieces that involve awkward turning of pages, can profitably be played from memory. In the latter case, however, there is another solution possible, namely the use of two scores instead of one!

Transposing

Lastly there is the case of transposing to be considered. Not the visual kind, of course, which successively transmutes the printed symbols, but the auditive one that recreates identical chords and intervals on a different pitch. If it is a piece with which I am fairly familiar, but which at the same time is difficult to read because of constant modulation and resulting frequent accidentals, like Strauss' *Cäcilie* for instance, I almost prefer to play it from memory in a different key.

And here we are arrived at the most crucial point in the accompanist's work, the only big problem that the accompanist of songs may exclusively call his own. There exists quite a formidable amount of literature dealing with this matter – in itself a tribute to its importance and difficulty. Having acquired my own facility in transposing entirely empirically, by constant practice rather than by evolving any method, I am afraid I could not comment on the suggestions of these authors from my own test and experience. One thing is certain: desirable though such an accomplishment is, there exists no road towards it. A material advantage is shared by those who through playing transposing instruments like the viola or cello, clarinet or horn, have developed a certain elasticity in reading mu-

sic, somewhat in the same way that one may apply different codes to the deciphering of one message. Like advantage favors students of, say, the 16th century, with its bewildering array of mezzo-soprano, baritone, sub-bass clefs in addition to the classical vocal clefs which Brahms still retained for his scores. And the orchestra conductor should naturally be groomed for this chore, since there is virtually no transposing interval up or down that does not at one time or other turn up in his work; even if his decoding is usually aided by correlating more obstreperous puzzles with the general context, the many thorny passages of a Wagner score where half a dozen or more low woodwinds and brass wend their unescorted way through several bars of near-insoluble mystery, constitute about the stiffest training in transposing anyone could wish for.

To the accompanist who has not been exposed to any of these rigorous experiences, I can only suggest taking up transposing in small doses, progressing logically from four-part settings of chorales, and easier piano pieces to more complicated works, and from semi- or full-tone down and up to wider intervals. Chances are that 99 out of 100 requests will be for putting a piece down half a tone or a full tone and one does well to develop this facility foremost; the majority of literature comes in two or more editions for different vocal ranges, and it is only the in-between intervals that have to be thus extemporized.

To be able to do this gives the accompanist an important edge over the one who had neglected to practice it, but it should be noted here that he should be given all reasonable consideration in fulfilling this request which after all

can be considered slightly beyond and above the call of strict duty. I remember from my days as a beginner that I considered it a point of honor to agree and start to transpose without batting an eyelash, and what is much worse, without the slightest investigation of what was in store for me when I didn't know the score. This was of course plain foolhardiness and I usually came to plentiful grief before I was half through. Any such exploit should be well worth a minute or more of contemplation and assessment, to both singer and accompanist. And where this wouldn't do so much good, as in certain Wolf, Debussy or Strauss songs, it is wiser to skip the song in question for this session or do it in the printed key and to delay the transposition until the pianist has had ample time to worry it out for himself.

This will under any circumstances be a saving of time as well as of wear and tear on the nerves. Wherever a singer has decided on one key that is not available in print, the safest procedure by any count is to have a copy ready which obviates any experimenting on the accompanist's part. This goes especially for artists who are obliged to have a succession of different accompanists on wide-flung tours, and have no time or opportunity to choose.

I remember having seen a gadget in the studio of a voice teacher, a lever attachment to the keyboard by which the pitch could be lowered half-stepwise as far as three full tones. This doubtlessly proved a great boon to a busy teacher, but it must have spoiled his studio accompanists to a degree for other occasions aside from being very irritating to those endowed with absolute pitch. Concerning this latter gift, I can truly say that it has been an encum-

brance more often than a help, and that the value of absolute pitch to mind has been grossly overrated. It is necessary, of course, to acquire the finest possible relative pitch and to keep improving it to the recognizing of quarter-tones and beyond as far as the ear can be made to go, but as to absolute pitch, I have often wished to be without it. Never more fervently than on the night when I arrived at the stage about two hours before the concert, to find that an over-ambitious piano tuner had tuned the instrument very nearly a half-step too high. That I had to transpose about half the program wouldn't have bothered me, since I had played it a number of times before on tour, but that I now had to do it around two corners, as it were, and hearing the wrong pitch from the keyboard to boot, was about to break the camel's back. I used what little time was left to get used to this exasperating sensation, and was able to play without too many noticeable mishaps.

This is an illustration for the well-known fact that man, under special pressure and strain, can do special things that he would not dare attempt under normal circumstances, and there follows an illustration for another fact, namely that just when you think you are over the hump and begin to relax, that fate will catch up with you. At this particular occasion I was rounding the last curve into the homestretch, meaning the last few bars of the last item on the program, Strauss' *Zueignung*, which every accompanist can play with his hands crossed behind his back. This is where I heaved a deep sigh of relief that my ordeal was over, and this is where I produced a hair-raising sequence of sounds that almost threw the singer, until I managed to meet her again at the final chord. The

experience up till then was highly exhilarating, and anyone who cares is welcome to it; mention of its unhappy ending may serve as a warning signal for the avoiding of similar Waterloos.

To close on a happier note, this chapter that is so fraught with desperate exertion and potential doom I shall put down a story that the late Ignaz Friedman told on himself. When still in his pianistic apprenticeship, he toured the Polish provinces with a tenor who had already passed his prime. One concert night matters proved just too difficult and the singer dropped suddenly in the middle of an aria into a lower key. Young Friedman was quick on the uptake, followed almost instantly and accompanied the rest of the aria in the new key, for which neat trick he was rewarded by the grateful singer at the end of the concert with an extra florin. It is my guess that his represented between 20% and 50% of the accompanist's nightly fee and therefore nothing to be sneezed at. Anyway it proved enough of an impetus for Friedman to start the one or other of the items in each of the remaining concerts in a key he knew would be too high for the tenor. We may take for granted that the latter did not have absolute pitch because Friedman completed the tour well ahead of his budget, if – lest we forget – somewhat behind in professional ethics. *Lapienti sat.*

From the singer's point of view there is this modification to be considered: Transposition into the most comfortable key is not only permissible, but definitely suggested for the sake of giving the most suitable vocal character to the following kinds of songs. Lullabies, conversation pieces, humorous as otherwise, where they do not get too dra-

matic, narratives and generally neutral songs, if one may use this adjective – all these are best performed when the key has been adjusted around the natural vocal center of gravity. By contrast, the key and implications of the original tessitura should be maintained where the composer seems to have wanted a shift towards the extreme ends of the range. Whether this concerns lightness and transparency of the upper register in the piano-pianissimo as in [Schumann's] *Mondnacht* _____, or stress on its sometimes edgy, even strident forte character as in *Waldesgespräch* _____, or full or dark, veiled tone towards the lower end of the scale as in Schubert's *Litanei*/Brahms' *Sapphische Ode*, just to name some obvious examples, here the indication is again following the line of least resistance, at the expense and to the increased glory of the singer's technique and versatility. The less attractive side of this principle naturally acts as a forceful deterrent in practice and will prevent the enthusiastic coach or accompanist from pressing the point beyond some token recognition, but I think it deserves mention.

Lastly, transposition within a cycle requires special circumspection. Even where the songs are not composed as an uninterrupted continuum as Beethoven's [*An Die Ferne Geliebte*], where a part change of key is of course out of the question, there are certain coherences and sequences of tonality which must be observed to retain the full musical contents. An outstanding example is the beginning of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* – the first song offers considerable difficulty in the high-pitched and presumably *piano* ending of its two verses; as a matter of fact this is about the most uncomfortable passage in the entire cy-

cle. To the stickler for perfection, adoption of the same transposing interval for the first three songs before returning to par, will still be anathema, but it is a defensible compromise, all things considered. There is a very definite and delicate relationship of key between any two songs especially in this cycle, which would necessarily be upset by any part transposition, but by respecting the most closely connected songs as indivisible for this purpose, the performer may at least lull his conscience by having chosen the lesser evil. Other cycles will occasionally present similar problems, but I know of no other instance where these little operations must be performed with as much cogitation and gingerliness.



Concert

It might not be entirely amiss to devote a few glimpses in chronological order to some aspects of an actual public performance.

To simplify matters, we shall concentrate on the recital featuring one soloist only – throughout the concert season there lurk relics of a bygone era that subsisted more substantially on the “gemixte pickles”; musically speaking of course, but such unintegrated accumulation of talent and material as still survives in “Benefit and Gala concerts” shall happily be kept outside our contemplation. Where the boiling down process has reached the intermediate stage of a joint recital of two soloists in a bewildering variety of combinations, we may look for some orderliness in the aligning of program and in the overall design – anent this type I would only suggest one thing and this is to abandon the alternating from group to group between the two performers, even though it contributes handsomely to the dramatic development of the whole proceedings and to the audience’s relish in them. Especially where singers are concerned, it is very hard on them to have to step out on the stage, sing a few songs and leave it again when the general atmosphere may just have changed from cold to indifferent. In a smaller measure other artists, too, lose from this arrangement, since only a few will be able to establish themselves quickly enough with their audience, so they may expect the *necessary / carry over* interest, appreciation and success across the in-

tervening music into their own next group. I know of at least one case where this unorthodox lumping together has been tried out, and with convincing success, I am happy to state. Delicate matters of precedence and preference reared their customary heads for a while, but the pros and cons for either half proved so well-balanced that neither artist had occasion to be dissatisfied with the final outcome. The first one had to grapple with the inevitable latecomers and the problem of warming up the audience to the concert pitch — that was the pianist's lot — the other, a soprano, had to eat out her heart waiting for the better part of an hour till her turn came, all the while listening to the growing enthusiasm for her fellow performer which culminated in a series of well-deserved encores. She had a similar success in the second half, I hasten to add, and all was well because it ended well. Both artists benefited visibly and audibly by not having to bridge each other's efforts — *Q.E.D.*

A horse of a somewhat different color is the concert which the German language calls so *gemütlich, Lieder-Arien-und-Duettenabend*, in its most fulminant splendor given, of course, by a soprano and a tenor, but encountered in divers other combinations as well. Here the part simultaneous combination of both voices brings additional lure into play, and presents the possibility, if not necessity of organizing the whole program along stricter lines of continuity.

Turning back to the premise of one featured soloist per concert, we have yet to deal with one persistent fixture on many such programs: "the assisting artist". Until fairly recently this often was a wunderkind aged roughly from

three to overaged; it, she or he, however, has by now almost exclusively been superseded by the accompanist of the evening who is then nobly billed as accompanist and assisting pianist. I will not deny that this custom has its obvious justification in a country where the successful singer often goes on a strenuous tour, covering a large area with little rest between individual trips and concerts, and where the taking over of one group by the accompanist in a solo capacity means all the difference to the overworked vocalist. This practice provides furthermore some relief to those among the audience who quail at the prospect of taking a song and lied recital "straight" – to say nothing of the golden opportunity it offers to the man at the piano, who as like as not numbers among the frustrated soloists and has been eagerly awaiting the moment when he may come into his own.

To those who seek entertainment in a concert – and let us not forget that with all the enormous increase in music appreciation everywhere, this means still the bulk of most any audience except in the isolated big music centers – this will be a welcome enrichment of the musical fare, and of the pleasure derived there from. From the puritan standpoint, it often means the interruption of an artistic continuity which unifies the program, and in certain instances may have as strongly knitted a logical sequence of apparently independent grouping as if it were a cycle of songs. Where this is the case, the singer is absolutely right in keeping the program intact, over and above well-meant suggestions to the contrary, and I keep a grateful memory of the occasions when a singer did so, even at

the risk of appearing jealous – which he was far from, needless to say.

And now we are definitely arrived at a bona fide song recital, the preferred model to take apart and look at piecemeal under a strong and unfriendly light, from its tender and cloudy start in the green room. I am not sure whether this latter name has anything to do with the complexion most commonly met in these purlieus, but the suggestion is close.

As to the prevailing mood of tension, it is definitely suggested that the accompanist leave the lion's share of stage fright and its outer manifestations to the soloist. In a team of two, it is necessary for one of them to retain or re-establish the equilibrium, and for reasons too obvious to go into, this is the accompanist's bounden duty, and since the average demands on his technical resources will be considerably less than on his partner's, he is patently in a position to comply. In order to do so successfully, he should, from the moment of meeting his partner in the artists' room, provide the proper foil for whatever state of mind the other happens to be in. This is clearly a problem of applied psychology and covers such a large field of unpredictable and disconnected items of behavior, that I shall content myself with the mention of but a few constantly recurring situations. It is most irritating for the soloist to have to listen to last minute practicing of difficult piano passages, a habit to which I confess myself an incorrigible addict. Whether he is silently going over difficult cues or just thinking beautiful thoughts, the repeated intrusion of pianistic snatches puts a great strain on his already sorely tried self-control. I have always

been grateful that the artists room in New York's Town Hall where I am used to doing a great deal of devout and hectic practicing "*in articulo mortis*" / in face of imminent doom, is one floor and two doors removed from the ante-room where the performer customarily spends the last minutes of privacy.

Such conversation as is fitfully indulged in between soloist and performer, where it does not involve review and confirmation of impending problems, will depend largely on temperamental individualities. There are artists who do not wish to be talked to, preferring to fight their spiritual battles silently and singlehandedly – above all they don't want to be told silly jokes. It is good always to have a selection of them ready for their sanguine opposites who insist on lively and light conversation on all and sundry topics strictly disconnected from the most pressing matters on hand.

The presence of a small group of intimate friends will in this case contribute handsomely towards easing the tension, especially where there is a considerable waiting period to be gotten over; the solicitous hovering about of well wishers (up to and including the manager, let it be said here respectfully but with determination) is an unwelcome and unnecessary addition to the woes of the introspective artist.

The accessories to a concert which seem to arouse the most burning curiosity among the spectators, lay as otherwise, are the fluid or firm substances used by singers to propitiate the vocal chords and their immediate entourage into a benevolent mood of cooperation. From my

variegated experience and from comparing notes with colleagues I must conclude that there is virtually nothing which has not at one time or another been consumed or applied in differing order and quantity. There are about as many various brands of persuasion as there are singers, with the accent on tea or coffee hot or cold, dried fruit nine years old, pills, soft drinks, alcohol both internally and externally, etc. One is led to surmise that it is mainly the devout belief into the efficacy of the chosen medicine, combined with the power of long established routine, which works the miracle, but this is obviously only for the initiate to judge.

Aside from these material systems of fortification, there are many methods of a more spiritual kind to boost the morale of the performer. Some of them are more or less traditional ways of self collection and concentration, others present a little superstitious routine through which the artist goes more or less self-consciously. And for the moment of supreme surrender, immediately before crossing into public domain, there come all the pertinent uncivilized words, in all civilized tongues, and the equally time-hallowed voodoo charm of spitting on the singer's shoulder (one to three times, left or right, according to prescription, to taste) and kicking them affectionately in their rear. (Once will do, please.) The accompanist will do well not to thwart his partner's expectations in this respect, regardless of what his own ideas on the subject are. Since they form for most artists a serious and indispensable act of completing their preparation for the ordeal.

Incidentally, my belief that these last rites were exclusively applicable to soloists, was recently shattered by a partner who returned this accolade with an enthusiasm that almost disqualified me for sitting down at the piano. One word to the wise...

And now we are off to the stage. The first law which must be observed, and by the same token the first one which is usually flouted, is that this is a stage, with all its prerogatives and peculiarities, and not just some empty space with a piano in its center to huddle or prop against during the proceedings. It is assumed that all efforts have been made to produce the most advantageous lighting for the occasion; in the case of an instrumental concert this is a desirable courtesy toward the audience who wants to watch the performers bowing, blowing and fingering; in a song recital, where the singer's facial expression is an integral part of the performance, it is indispensable. When I first heard of a singer, and a male one to boot, who went on tour with a couple of floodlights in his luggage, I thought this was carrying a good intention too far; increasing acquaintance with insufficiently lit auditoriums has completely changed my view. Close to lighting in importance is the relative position of the piano and backdrop on the stage. Their bearing on the acoustics is obvious, but the zeal in trying for the best results in both these directions, is often cooled by the fact that they seem to be mutually exclusive. Either the footlights focus too far towards the back of the stage, or the canopy comes too far down from the from ceiling, or the backdrop cannot be budged from the deepest recesses of a cavernous stage. These difficulties must be accepted with good grace, es-

pecially where the auditorium has not been designed to be primarily a concert hall, but they should be assessed as to their influence on the performance and require some experience on the part of the artist which is usually only gotten the hard way. My own itinerary has reached from chapels through gymnasiums to a circus arena: in the last instance, on the occasion of a New Year's Eve concert in a large circus. I had finished my job shortly before midnight, and was naturally anxious to reach the destination of my private New Year's celebration in time. Finding all the nearest exits blocked by an enormous array of elephants waiting their cue – whether to trumpet the New Year in or for some less musical purpose I didn't linger to find out – I gathered all my courage to slide under a pair of them to the other side of the corridor and *then / thus* to liberty. The fact that I lived to write of this daring exploit, attests to a happy ending, due no doubt to the magic of the music the elephants had just been listening to. And I won't do it again.

To return elegantly to the point of departure, whether you are a circus or a concert artist, you are public property from the moment you are visible to the public. It is therefore important to acknowledge this in the way you march out towards the piano. There are lots of do's and don'ts concerning this, as well as your various exits from the stage – they vary necessarily with the individual setup and personages involved, but it is always incumbent on performers to make a success of themselves even before they start their music. Not to tread too regally and self-possessed when you are a young beginner, nor to prance skittishly when your standing calls for greater

dignity, nor to hang your head in self-absorption nor to grin at the audience in a feverish bid for sympathy, acknowledging their greeting applause with just the right mixture of casualness and pleasure – all this calls for poise, and the more so of course, the less poised you feel inside. Since poise is something that comes more easily to some people than to others, I want to stress here that its outer aspects can be acquired artificially to a certain measure, and that too much emphasis cannot be laid on the necessity of aiding a natural process where it should be too slow and painful.

The singer may have a big lump in her throat and be in utter physical as well as mental agony as she traverses the stage, but this must remain her secret, at least until she starts singing. There are limits to what the individual can do in overcoming the influence of stage fright on the vocal output, and it is generally accepted that two or three songs, or even a whole group may be sung with a variety of shortcomings which can be expected to disappear gradually. I remember with great sympathy instances when the singer proved unable to get out from under this cloud and performed a whole program in a spirit of "*Ave Caisar, monturi te salutant.*" There is no doubt that many promising careers were either nipped in the bud or wrecked at a later stage because the artist wasn't able to produce enough stamina or self-control in the face of excessive stage fright – I do not here suggest that taking a course in one of those establishments that correct such faults, or going through a series of mental and physical gymnastics of one's own brand is the unique sesame to a successful career, but it most certainly enables the artist in

establishing himself favorably in the public eye as well as before his own; the comfort derived from the response to visual attractiveness is often just the needed stimulus to jump the hurdle in actual performance. The more splendid the concert attire, the greater the necessity of coordination between countenance and movement with your sartorial appearance. Since the men's working clothes are uniform, such remarks are naturally addressed more to the ladies. Preoccupation with details of her dress and hairdo up to the last moment bodes no good for balance of mind and spirit in the beginning of the concert, but there is nothing one can do at that point. Such discipline has to be rehearsed long beforehand, as a vital part of the performance proper. This sad state of affairs vaguely parallels a constantly recurring phenomenon in performance; when we come to a difficult passage, an exposed note or whatever unpleasant chore it may be, we are too apt to concentrate so fully on this obstacle that we omit some care and attention in the treatment of the immediately preceding notes. This naturally denies the singer in the same measure of the very basis on which he may hope to overcome this obstacle, and practically insures a failure. Giving particular care to the preceding phrase not only helps retain and strengthen the technical support for the ordeal to come, it also relieves some of the emotional stress which has been accumulating on the latter and will doubtless get in the way of successful performance, aside from the intrinsic difficulty. This must so palpably have been every singer's experience, time and again, that it should be possible for him to see the analogy in the problem of starting the concert. Instead of dwelling on the paralyzing thought of having to get over the first notes, it

would be infinitely preferable to concentrate by means fair and foul on remaining serene, at least on appearing so. To ask for the real thing, would be unjust and quite certainly out of reach for 99 of 100 artists from what I have seen. But to simulate it, to condition oneself by so doing for a favorable state of mind to begin in, and lastly to neutralize thereby some of the excess nervous strength, is to me the most important task for the performer from the last minutes before entering the stage to the first bar of music. The less he has given way to his nervousness before, the more amenable he will of course be to such self-induced euphoria, but I don't want to reach too deeply into the domain of individual temperament. Giving a generous outlet to some pent-up nervous energy shortly before the concert, may be of considerable importance for steadying and steeling oneself and is furthermore the artist's own privilege to adjust as he sees fit. What I am intent on is the judicious use of the time consumed in crossing the no-man's land from the mirror in the artist's room to the piano on the stage.

As for the accompanist who follows in the soloist's wake, one main thing for him to observe is keeping a distance so that the former's entry is not crowded in the eye of the assembly, without however creating the impression that a separate triumphal entry was the secret aim of such discretion. Every now and then the peculiar arrangements of the locality make it necessary for the accompanist to cross in front before the singer. If the latter be a lady, the lesser evil for the latter is definitely to turn his back to the audience, regrettable though it may be. If the singer be male, the question whether he or the ladies in the audience rate

precedence, might be deemed of the moot brand, but with all due respect to the ladies present, I still think that the first courtesy goes to your partner on the stage.

And now comes one of the supreme tests in the performer's work, the waiting until everybody, including himself, has calmed down to the point of starting the music. These are moments fraught with inner tension and pressure of the highest degree, and it requires great courage and strength of mind to delay until this proper moment has been reached. It is as marvelous a thing to behold as it is rare, when the performer retains control of the situation until the famous pin could be heard dropping, and then one or two beats beyond it, to create the neutral vacuum in which the first contact with his audience as a participating medium in the concert is made. I value these rare moments of concentrated silence as I do those immediately after the end of a song, before the applause starts; to me they are the ideal outer frame that distinguishes the performance from the conventionalized pattern of its background, and at the same time the closest tie between artist and audience. They happen once in a blue moon, just often enough to remind you how wonderful an experience it is to have a perfect performance and a perfect audience reacting to each other.

In such instances no special signal from singer to accompanist is necessary to start the music — the well-reined sensitive teammate will do so at just the right moment. But where such understanding has not yet developed, it is not necessary for the singer to interrupt or change her stance with too obvious a movement — the slightest nod or lift of the head, a quiet glance at the accompanist from

the corner of the eye will suffice. There is however another school of thought which makes a virtue of necessity and gives the signal with the deliberation of a slow 90 degree turn and nod to the accompanist. Startled *though/as* I confess I was when this first happened to me, I have come to appreciate this courtly gesture as a kind of curtain-raiser for the play in the play, and as such it has enhanced rather than disturbed the atmosphere of the performance. Again we can say it matters only how these means are employed towards the end, not so particularly what they are, as long as they do not convey a spiritual or mental rolling up of shirtsleeves with the almost audible clarion call, "Gangway!" which unfortunately can frequently be observed.

Let us now assume that the soloist has come through the first number without a hitch and that the applause is of such magnitude that it is well audible above the hubbub caused by the throwing up of the doors to the distinguished latecomers and their impressive milling down the aisles. No matter how big the disturbance, no matter how busy the soloist may still be trying to overcome stage fright and related brands of nervousness, let him or her concentrate fully and graciously on the applause while it lasts. Too often one witnesses the spectacle of a thus preoccupied singer taking a perfunctory bow with a pained smile, and proceeding at once to wiping the brow in whose sweat he just finished laboring, thereby automatically killing the interest of the audience in him as he seems to be uninterested in his public. Some performers may feel that their first offering hasn't been good enough to merit the acknowledgment it produced, and almost

seem to indicate by their attitude that the applause is misplaced. Needless to say, this self-criticism is entirely wrong and serves only to cool the friendly feelings of the audience that may have wanted to encourage and help the artist by this applause, to get settled in his stride. Such kindness calls for particularly friendly acknowledgement on the part of the performer and not a rebuff. Such problems are more apt to crop up at the beginning of a program, but the principle naturally holds for the entire concert. As to taking the bow at the end of the group, it is always advisable to take it "once" at the piano, — albeit in installments in various directions where the seating arrangement calls for it — and then walk off the stage. If the public liked it enough there will be time to emerge again triumphantly and take another bow or two — nothing is more embarrassing than "milking" the applause for all its worth, while lingering by the piano, and then have to walk off the stage while it dies down in full view. No stage is small enough to allow such risks, and most stages will become a veritable *via dolorosa* if the artist loitered too long.

An interesting variety of this ill-gotten habit is the practice of arresting one's exodus at one or — horrors — more stations to take a bow *en passant*. This, incidentally, puts a tricky problem to the accompanist: is he to shadow the singer as it were? Or should he remain at the piano waiting to make a bee-line for the exit after the singer is [finished? — Manuscript breaks off in mid-page — *PSU*]



Program³

At this crucial point let us leave the singer and his accompanist for a while to wrestle with themselves, each other and the audience, while we look at the program.

No matter what type or timbre of voice, what taste or repertory may be concerned, in the designing of the program one thing is certain, and that is that the first item on it should be one that enables the singer to establish his vocal self roundly and reliably with the audience. For that purpose a piece of more or less neutral color and moderate tempo and range in pitch and dynamics, and last not least, of moderate emotional temper should be the obvious choice, especially for the beginner — the experienced artist is naturally in a position to dispense with such concerns, according to the degree of his command of the situation. The foregoing considerations, rather than any niceties of historical circumspection, are mostly responsible for the fact that so often we find music of the 18th century on the top of the bill. And there is nothing to be said against it, with one proviso, however: that the artist pay some attention also to the text of his first offering, granted that there wouldn't be too many people in the audience to take him seriously. I think it is unnecessary for a singer to start with "*Lascia ch'io pianga*" (O Let Me Weep) let

³ The first three paragraphs of this chapter are on separate manuscript from the pad which the rest of the chapter solely occupies, and were presumably written subsequently to introduce it.

alone "*Lasciate mimmorire*" (O Let Me Die). This goes especially for a singer who at this point identifies himself much more intimately and intensely with the meaning of these words than the composer ever dreamed of realizing in his music. Another favorite "starter" has struck me as somewhat ill-timed for a different reason: it is Handel's "*Sleep, why dost thou...me?*" I may appear finicky in laboring such a minute point, but notwithstanding the magnificent music that was written to the above-quoted and similar texts, they have at times provoked unintended reactions from the audience and should therefore be handled with care.

And now the first chord has been struck, the music is under way. Let the accompanist be mindful that at the very beginning it is better to err on the side of being too loud. These first introductory beats are not only the prelude proper for the first song or aria, they are also the foundation and background for the singer to start his evening's work, and, lastly, they are the final rallying point for the attention of the audience that up to that moment may still have been diffused in a variety of extra-musical concerns and directions. In observing these implications, one should however avoid giving the impression of cranking on an obstinate old car; by the same token, it is highly regrettable if the accompanist — by inclination or by constraint — slows down in his introduction when he comes to the entry of the voice. This is a widespread practice, derived, no doubt, from such preludes which had no other purpose than just this — namely to give the singer time to gather his vocal chords, wits and other paraphernalia, and to rouse him into action by an irritating, if not

necessarily tantalizing slowdown on his cue. In the majority of preludes this practice runs counter to the patent intentions of the composer and is tantamount to giving a second, false start to the song when one picks up the tempo primo after a successful junction of piano and voice. It is also in many cases, an unnecessary and poor compliment to the singer who should be credited with enough musicianship to come in on time without special invitation—a feat usually much less difficult than catching a proper moment to get in under a jumping rope, a trick which *the average singer / everybody* may be presumed to have mastered at an earlier stage of development.

The three factors that will most incisively influence the making up of any program are voice range, personality and nationality of the singer, with the regional and other differences in his audience running a close second. Generally speaking, we should assume that a Scandinavian singer will be the natural interpreter of Scandinavian music, a man rather than a woman the obvious choice for Schubert's song cycles, and a dark, powerful male or female voice for Brahms' four serious songs. In practice we may however notice a considerable amount of overlapping noticeable on all these counts.

To limit a woman singer to the presentation of song literature written from the female angle, would eliminate 2/3 if not more, of all the standard repertory from her program. While there is a great body of vocal music that would comply with such a precept, it is a fact that the overwhelming majority of poems were written by men who expressed their personal emotions. On the other hand, there seem to be a lot more sopranos and mezzos

than baritones, let alone tenors, and in order to incorporate most of the worthwhile literature in our concert life, we must accept the letting down of these barriers almost to the ground. I said "almost" advisedly, because there are extreme cases which are so obviously conceived and characterized in terms of a particular sex that to tackle them from the opposite corner is courting ridicule if not disaster. I am informed that an outstanding *tenor / baritone* of a past generation, David Bispham, sang Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* with authority and success. This, frankly, goes well beyond the limit of what I would suggest to the most ambitious, experienced and imaginative male singer. It is a risky tour de force just as a woman Mussorgski's "*Fieldmarshal*" or "*Flea*" would be, and as near ludicrous, considering the unalterably feminine character and the text of its subject, as a woman's singing Ravel's blatantly male *Chansons Madécasses*.

Actually, with the exception of a few songs like these, we have long arrived at such an elasticity of spirit and perception that no more eyebrows are raised on this account, provided the artist is possessed of the requisite versatility. This should include, to my mind, not only a mental turn-about and concentration on emotional and intellectual peculiarities of the other sex as they are suggested by the poetic subject matter and its treatment; even this alone constitutes a formidable assignment. I should like to hear definite vocal variation in the treating of such songs. This does not mean an artificial thickening and darkening of the voice when a woman sings a man's song, which would be a crude and, besides, a technically dangerous thing to do. There is a subtler way to suggest

the same thing: If we compare the average phrasing characteristics of the female and male singer, we find that the greater natural roughness in the lower frequencies of the male voice, possibly coupled with greater directness and less delicacy in the mental approach, makes for an impression of foursquareness and solidity, accompanied by the absence of the pliability and that almost imperceptible sliding *espressivo* which distinguishes the attack of single notes as well as the fashioning of whole phrases in the female voice.

Without sacrificing the beauty of tone and other vocal accomplishments, a soprano will be able to suggest the male character of a song by dwelling on these criteria. There are phrases which come in a natural *legato* to a woman, but which a man would only sing *détaché*—just as the tempo in which the same phrase is sung, will *a priori* vary between man and woman, aside from consideration of voice, timbre and individual interpretation. This is not an easy thing to put into words; it really depends on the imagination and resourcefulness of the singer.

It is naturally more difficult for the male singer to present the characteristics of the opposite sex in his technique and style, but as he, for reasons stated before, has much less cause to trespass outside his proper realm in the song literature, we may justly leave him to his worries.

Strategically speaking, the most important time in the course of a recital is that immediately before and after the intermission. During the first group the latecomers usually prevent the audience from concentrating fully on the artist, which is not a bad thing when we consider that the

latter needs some time to find his own bearings. Towards the end of the program the situation is somewhat similar in reverse. There are the early leavers, among whom it is important to count the critics who must race to meet their deadline and have got to make up their minds earlier in the course of the proceedings. It is necessary to be aware of this peculiarity, because the artist who leaves his *pièce de résistance* for the end, is sunk. Not only will it pass into oblivion as far as the reviews go, but by that time the receptivity of his audience has usually reached a degree of saturation which deprives their senses of some of the keenness of appreciation they may have had until then.

This does not mean that for the end one should choose exclusively chestnuts wrapped in trash, as it is lamentably to be witnessed so often. There is always enough good music to draw from for the winding up of the program, but the main attraction should be the centerpiece. For that there are two main categories of interest: either new music, including first performances, or otherwise ranking as novelty – or music that stems from the standard repertory but is seldom heard, such as less known songs or cycles by the established composers roughly up to Debussy and Wolfe, and even beyond. The chief consideration that should be given in either case, is that it is not of sufficient merit to present music because it is new or neglected, simply because it isn't worth the performer's labors or the public's attention. To pick up insignificant music because the name hasn't yet had a single chance to become hallowed, is equally to be discouraged, unless it constitutes such a marvelous vehicle for the vocal and interpretive abilities of the singer that

the factor of “pioneering” or “slumming in music” as it were, may justly be disregarded. Where this is not the object, and where music of 2nd- or 3rd-grade attractiveness and importance is offered in the manner of Victorian period pieces and kindred dusty curios, care must be taken to balance the rest of the bill-of-fare with weightier material.

Talking of balance, this is really the most important thing to watch in the making-up of the program, and in every imaginable respect. Balance between loud and soft, slow and fast songs, long and short as well as gay and sad ones, sharp and flat keys, high and low registers and different basic rhythms. Many people are intensely aware of the undesirability of two, let alone more successive songs in the same key, yet they will think nothing of presenting a succession of songs in moderato 4/4 time, than which nothing could be deadlier, regardless of variety in tonality. In the majority of cases, there is enough modulation to distant harmonies in the course of a song, to make up for accidental sameness of ground key, but once you get in a rut with the metrum, there is nothing one can do about that. Next in importance to the watchful eye should be the proper use of the whole vocal gamut. With every other brand of variation and balance attended to, there are still too many programs offered which limit the singer to an unnecessarily small range – and this is a great pity. He should realize that a few stray top notes on climaxes do not compensate for his neglecting the upper fourth or fifth of his scale, which is usually the most impressive and brilliant one. The same goes for the lower range – provided he has one and can handle it, of course. We all

know that even very experienced troupers among the singers *becomes a bit apprehensive / puts on his kid gloves* when he ventures into his extreme range, but I suggest that this is often because this range is neglected to a degree which makes such a venture a hazard. I am not talking of high B's, C's or anything near it — perish the thought — I mean the natural prolongation at either end of the middle octave or less, in which too many people prefer to paddle around too long. They can achieve miracles of camouflage, color, diction and general interpretation, but the vocal appeal, which is still considered half of their success, will be unsatisfactory. This needn't be. If a soprano, for instance, doesn't sing f's and g's, any amount of them, there is something wrong with the program. Sometimes, when rehearsing a program, the advent of a beautiful ringing note in this vicinity thrilled me with pleasure beyond compare, but when I realized that I had practically been panting during the group and a half for it to happen, I decided that my outraged sense of proportion had to take some action.

As to the other items of balance, their treatment is more or less self-evident, but it might be suggested that the best solution is not the too obvious alternating of opposites, and that even in the case of the cherished end effect of a group, the stereotyped brilliant song could profitably be replaced here and there by some type with no less strong, but perhaps less ostentatious climax.

Lastly, some words about the inclusion of cycles in the program:

Regardless of poetic and musical values in cycles (on the average in the same measure as one finds them in single songs) there is that one distinguishing aspect: the mere fact that one song leads into another, presumably and preferably without interruption by applause or just ordinary letdown, makes for an accumulation of suspense, for an intensification of performance and reception which do not obtain outside the cycle. The mere element of longer duration, the absence of the customary relaxation after individual songs, works here to the benefit of the performer in first line, and usually leaves the audience with the impression of greater artistic and emotional experience. This should not be construed as an invitation to the singer to sort of lean back and take it easy on these grounds — there is little of that anyway, because the vocal and interpretational demands of a cycle have an accumulative effect on his nervous system, too, and he will have to husband his forces properly in order to stay within his vocal budget and get through with the requisite authority. Another advantage lies in the way the various songs in the cycle refer to each other and thereby often acquire a deeper and wider meaning as well as more individual coloring than if they were interpreted singly. A case in point is Schumann's "*Ich Grolle Nicht*", which is very frequently sung as a single song and has long become an "old reliable" among the warhorses. There is no question that it stands easily and most effectively on its own feet, vocally, musically, dramatically, what have you — yet all this seems to be somewhat superficial until it is performed in the sequence of the cycle, and benefits from the additional accent of light and shadow that is derived from the context.

As to the cycle literature itself, there are specimens of all sizes, grades and hues. There are cycles which present a very closely knit poetic and musical entity, bona fide cycles as it were – and there are cycles which are little more than assorted songs grouped under one heading, for various reasons lying outside their contents proper, like Schumann's *Myrthen*, or even his *Liederkreis* which consists of a dozen Eichendorff lieder, among which I haven't been able to detect any particular affinity or development that put them in the same category as *Dichterliebe* or *Frauenliebe und leben*.

As is to be expected, the cycles are of varying appeal to the audience, and for this as well as other reasons to the performer – But because of the audience appeal he will have to choose more carefully since such a considerable portion of his program is at stake. Only an artist who is very sure of himself and of his audience, will want to tackle either of the Schubert cycles which comfortably fill the whole length of the recital, and for this reason already are a formidable task; among the comparatively shorter ones it is those which deal extensively with grief in its various aspects, that an artist must treat gingerly with regard to the rest of the program. Indeed, when it comes to the billing of the practically unrelieved gloom and stark terror of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* or Mussorgski's *Songs and Dances of Death*, I sometimes feel that such concentrated pain can only be compensated by devoting the balance entirely to Gilbert and Sullivan, Johann Strauss and Victor Herbert. I do not remember ever having seen such word [?] grouping, but should think that it would attract a crowd of listeners which otherwise give cycles of this

description a wide berth. Apart from these extremes, which should only be inflicted on the hardiest, best-trained audiences by similarly schooled performers, we have a wide choice of more viable literature in all languages and styles.

There are groups like Schumann's *Der Arme Peter* or Faure's *Poeme d'un Jour*, which have the continuity of the cyclic form, but are actually too short to establish any extraordinary experience of suspense and intensity – on the other end there are the *Dichterliebe* and *LaBonne Chanson* by the same pair of composers, which in expressive scope and artistic concept run the full gamut of human emotion and take up considerable space in the program. The latter is also true of Grieg's *Haeytussa Cycle* which for me contains some of his most beautiful music, but has, possibly for lack of any epic or dramatic development, not been able to inspire many singers to devote such a large portion of their program to it. A happy medium in most respects may be said to be represented by Beethoven's *Six Songs by Gellert*, Schumann's *Frauenliebe* and L. Mussorgski's _____ *from the Nursery*, Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, which last an average of less than 20 minutes and are therefore the equivalent of the usual group of songs on the program. I should like to mention in the same breath Brahms' *Four Serious Songs*, even if one might take exception to calling them a happy medium. Yet if we compare them with the savage despair of Mussorgski or the nervously twisting grief of Mahler, we can see that Brahms' superb control of both form and expression puts his songs of death in a different category musically speaking, just as his texts from the Holy Scriptures has raised

them emotionally to a suprapersonal level where problems of individual fear and catastrophe do not exist. Let us not mistake this differentiation as a critique of artistic merits. As far as direct emotional impact on the audience is concerned, the uninhibited display of feeling in either Mahler's or Mussorgski's death songs will probably grip and shake them much more strongly, therefore from the point of making an effect they might even be preferable, once the singer has made up his mind to dwell on such unpleasant things at great length. The impression of the *Four Serious Songs* is based on a greater variety of elements, moral as well as esthetic, and will therefore be more readily absorbed by an audience that usually dislikes to face this subject matter so closely. Thus it may be classified with the reassuring if decidedly a – [?] music term of calculated risk. In conclusion I would like to say that the inclusion of at least one cycle is always a pleasant experience to me, as a listener no less than as performer. No instrumentalist in his right senses would play a program that consisted of roughly one and a half dozen single pieces, no matter how excellent and well contrasted. By the same token it should be as natural for the singer to want at least one larger musical entity on his program, for reasons of variety as much as to prove his mettle in a more ambitious task.

Gratifying though the cashing in of applause after each individual song may be, the constant fluctuation between concentrating on the music for a few minutes, and half-relaxing in the intervals is not my ideal of concert experience, active or passive. I suppose it would be asking too much to abolish public acknowledgement after each song

and reserve it for the end of a complete group, but I am pretty sure it would be to the advantage of everybody concerned. Needless to say — this would call for the ideal audience, the ideal singer and the ideal program, but may we not be permitted some daydreaming once in a while — and on paper? There was a time when no responsible singer would have presented a serious recital without meticulous observance of chronological protocol and precedence. If the program covered a long historical development, this may often have been instructive, especially where a deliberate attempt was made to show a continuity of some sort. Where this was not the case and where only a nearsighted reluctance to do Brahms after Debussy or Wolf before Bach was the motivating power, the result was sometimes questionable; it usually meant crowding heavy musical fare in the first half or two-thirds of the evening, and bringing the lighter varieties only after the listeners had already gorged themselves to a point of surfeit where their appreciation of delicacy, esprit and sophisticated humor was not functioning properly anymore. More recent usage has fortunately discarded this point of view, and now we find a delightful independence from historical sequence, much to the benefit of maintaining variety and contrast as well as continuous balance between what could be termed musical proteins and the icing or spicing of the program.

Hand in hand with this emancipation goes an improvement in the handling of the language problem. Unless a singer started with some classical English music, Elizabethan or otherwise, or did Handel or Bach arias in English, his public in the majority of cases had to wait till the last

group to hear music in their own language. Certain cases from time to time were provided where Slav, or Scandinavian music was sung in English translations earlier in the program, but the aspect of the garden variety presented an impressive array of Italian, German and French, with Russian, Norwegian and Spanish often thrown in for good measure, and with English as the last "also run". This was of course a great strain on the ears of those who did not understand the other languages, and showed little regard or perspicacity on the part of the singer.

There are certain underlying factors to be considered in this context, especially the nationality of the singer and the type of his audience. If the latter be of the sophisticated kind that is met in larger cultural centers, and if the artist happen to be an outstanding exponent of French or German literature, it would be a waste of energy and opportunity to expect him to devote a large part of the program, or for that matter any time at all, to the presentation of music other than the "*specialité de la maison*." This is a courtesy which may reasonably be reserved for cities of less cosmopolitan background where much of his appeal and success will depend on grace and extent of this gesture. And he will be wise not to wait too long before coming round to it. It is only fair to the artist as well as to several small town audiences to mention here that I was witness to a whole program delivered in a strange language and received with unanimous enthusiasm, even though not more than a handful of people could understand the words. This is the highest compliment to the interpreter, and no less a tribute to the esthetic sense of

the listeners – nevertheless we shall do well to regard these instances as highly gratifying exceptions to a rule.

Unless the group in question contains one or two heftier arias, it is advisable to have at least four songs in any one group, and not more than six or seven, unless it is a cycle, of course. Three songs usually consume too little time for singer and audience to recreate and enjoy fully a contact that has necessarily been lost to some extent during the preceding interval; and from the performer's point of view, each new group among the four or five in the average recital is as much a new start to him as it is a continuation – naturally it would be unwise to interrupt a process of mental and vocal reestablishment oftener than necessary. For this simple reason it is preferable to present six or even seven songs in one large group, even where differences of language or composer might first suggest their being separated. Care must be exercised here not to combine too many diverging elements, or even couple two incompatible groups – but in principle, the less coming and going there is on stage, the better I believe the singer will fare, both in matters of support from the audience as of his own breath support. I distinctly remember occasions where the latter consideration played a big role in the delivery of a program. It is amazing what havoc a steep ramp or a rickety stair to the stage may create in the respiratory budget of a singer, so here is another good reason for him to stay put as long as feasible. Casting a glance at the right-hand side of the program, which should come as automatic reflex to anybody who is familiar with the study of menus, we find all mathematical possibilities represented, from proud, im-

pressive and risky one-man shows to 17 songs by 18 composers in about as many styles and half a dozen tongues. The singer may have been overly impressed by the Shauspieldirektor's recipe in Goethe's *Faust*: "Wer vieles" but the first impression is certainly a messy one. Reserving at least two groups to one composer each should strike a generally acceptable balance – and to those who are looking for a different unifying *solution / aspect*, I would suggest a grouping of various settings of the same poem. This is probably found so seldom in practice because it puts a disproportional burden on the interpreter; it obliges him to make and project a number of radically different, yet equally clear and convincing mental and emotional pictures of all identical subject matter. It is true the composer helps him in establishing this differentiation, but not in keeping these images apart, as they are cancelling or superimposing each other in his crowded mind. Yet the unique esthetic pleasure derived from the juxtaposition of even two compositions of the same text is such that I wish it were done oftener. This is the occasion where I would cheerfully and urgently invite the singer not to perform from memory, because he will need his undivided energy for this formidable task. But it appears to me that the singer, in eschewing the concentrated rigors of such an enterprise, forgoes an opportunity of effect and appeal to the audience which is potentially on the same high level of achievement as his labors. And this fact should make it worth his while to try it at least once when the proper chance *turns up / offers itself*.

If we have dwelt at such length on caviar for singer and audience, it is only fitting that we should devote a little, if less glamorous contemplation to the music gathered under the affectionate name of chestnuts (alias warhorses, alias battleships, etc.). Let us right here make a sharp distinction between honest-to-God good music that was so effective and catching it just couldn't help becoming popular to the point of being used as a safety catch, and would-be music that was from the beginning designed to tickle the listening ear while, excuse the expression, blunting it to the flagrant lack of artistic merits. There seems to occur a constant ebb and tide in popularity and frequency of performance for some of these. It is with the trashy brand thereof preferable to present them, if one indeed must do so, when the silent contempt in which they have been held, has bred enough unfamiliarity to make them into period pieces. The incubation period may vary from a couple of years to a couple of generations. Both types occupy prominent places in the heart of hearing (audiences) and deservedly so, if in varying measure. Good music doesn't become less good, nor to my mind or ear even less attractive because it is frequently performed, and you find yourself whistling or humming pleasantly along (to the delight of your neighbor, needless to say). So much recollected joy and satisfaction from former hearings adds to the experience of the present one that its emotional aspect easily swallows up the musical and intellectual message. As to one's attitude about including several popular warhorses of the deserving kind: one should always do so in restrained proportion and attractive grouping with less well-known music, provided there is reasonable assurance present of doing justice to

them and to oneself. With most of them, the performer faces automatic comparison in the public's ear, including that of the critics, with the vocal and general artistic standards set by the greatest interpreters; music that grew off the beaten track offers him a better chance of being appreciated in his own right and on his own terms.

Two things should always be kept in mind: a tablespoonful of chestnuts will go a long way, and whenever they are offered, they must be offered, more than any other music, as if it were the very first performance — any reliance on greater public appeal or well-trumpeted high notes is a grave mistake on the part of the performer — neither music nor audience should ever be taken for granted. *Let us / And if we* remember that music had its roots and its feelers exclusively in man's emotional system before it branched out into his intellect, then there is no reason why we should not permit ourselves an occasional letting down of critical barriers, and surrender fully to the sweet lure of familiar sound waves lapping at our ear drums. Such animal-like enjoyment of auditory sensations reaches more directly and quickly the cockles of our heart; whatever these receiving instruments of our innermost being may represent physically — a mysterious matter concerning which there exists incredibly widespread uncertainty — the response they give to those assorted chestnuts, warhorses and battlewagons, is unquestionable proof that the latter form an important, indispensable ingredient in everybody's musical diet. The more professional or generally intellectual inroads we allow to be made on such simple but pure delights, the more we lose the faculty to create at will the blankness of

mind that insures to our ears the temporary freedom from critical supervision. This is a process which can't be retarded, let alone avoided, in a musical career, and is greatly expedited by a universal preference to knowing rather than sensing. With all the wonderful conscious artistic experiences I cherish in my memory, there goes the happy recollection of a literal handful of instances when I was able to shut out my professional training and other generally adulterating influences from my listening, to let myself be carried away on wings of song and strings, in blissful oblivion of everything I wrote about in this book, and of everything else. I would not presume to assess the comparative value of such musico-biological experience for anyone but myself, but cannot help but feeling that the capacity for it should be retained and nursed carefully in proportion to the jeopardy into which it is falling progressively.

This last digression was largely prompted by the bearing it has on the enjoyment of chestnuts and co., because this is the natural time and place for the civilized listener to practice and indulge his musical semi- to sub-consciousness. Moreover there is another equally desirable goal to be reached by this luxuriating in unalertness. The painless absorption – under (the beneficial) local anesthesia of the critical mind – of a lot of indifferent to outright bad music which is used as vehicle, as the lovely term goes. What so marvelously much worthless music is sung and resung, printed and reprinted, when there is such a vast amount of good music which equals or excels it on every imaginable count of effectiveness, melodiousness, charm, peppy rhythm and popping high notes, is beyond

my understanding – My choicest personal wrath is reserved for the sugarcoating of religious texts, which shamelessly trades on the powerful emotional appeal of prayer and Bible quotation, to smuggle revoltingly vulgar fabrications into the repertory of the singer (and thence into the defenseless mind of any untrained, uncritical listener). For these sorry excrescences of pseudo-musical spirits not local but total amnesia would be the proper treatment. However, this will have to remain wishful thinking. Just in order to forestall painful misunderstandings, I add that I am happily aware of the existence of much religious music which not only preserves the exterior characteristics, but illuminates and matches the beauty, dignity and richness of the words. To exemplify this, I should like to propose here a full size program of sacred music for concert or church.⁴

Encores

The last, but not least item on the program agenda is of course its imprinted parts [unprinted part? – PSU], the encore. As regrettably as inevitably it has become standard procedure to measure the success of a concert in terms of encores delivered, sometimes noisy and vociferous demand, sometimes the drop of a hat, and sometimes with sovereign disregard of the lack of any encouragement, where the program consists more or less of independent groups, the injection of an encore can be left to the spur of the moment; it goes without saying that a cer-

⁴ Here he listed Dvorak, Brahms, Bach, Wolf, Mendelssohn, Handel, *Allelujah* (presumably Mozart?), evidently with the intention of filling in specifics later.

tain correspondence of style and language between group and encore should be retained – where however the program presents a continuity of development that embraces several groups or its entirety, then encores should definitely be left to the end, or if there should be a contextual semicolon – till the intermission. It is a risky policy to bring unknown music, especially in foreign languages, at this juncture. Encores are presumably the exclusive domain and reward of the public which has frequently had a good deal of music rammed down its ears it would not voluntarily have put up with. Thus, while one should not bend over backward in trying to meet them, a spectacle which is to be avoided under all circumstances, it is gracious and useful to unbend to the point of performing request numbers or otherwise easily accessible music of a kind that approximates the average artistic level of the regular program. It will depend on the perspicacity and resourcefulness of the artist to bring the encores in an order that keeps a certain variety, and to sense the exact moment when to stop his generosity. Both he and the audience may be enjoying one of those rare feasts where one encore is piled on another in a spendthrift procession of climaxes, and yet all of a sudden there is a slump in the hitherto enthusiastic response and he realizes too late that he has missed the boat. Far better to leave the public with a taste for more, but such self-denial is not easy to time properly. There might also be prevalent among the paying audience, and understandably so, the idea that it enhances the pleasure of listening if you get it for nothing – admittedly an unlovely attitude of which I myself have been guilty more than once; with this in mind, I have on several occasions suggested to generous-minded popular

artists to cut their program down and use the amputated items as encores. This is cheating, in a way, but there is certainly justification in staying securely and comfortably within one's physical limits and being liberal with extra afterwards, than in plowing through a formidable list of songs, that gets both performer and audience too near the point of saturation, or exhaustion, at the end.

The one encore which should practically never be attempted, is the repetition of a particularly successful song. The chances are umptyumphant that one won't go over as well as the first time, since the edge of concentration is bound to be dulled and the element of surprise missing – so just once in a very blue moon, when a short humorous or delicate song has kindled that seemingly interminable kind of applause, the artist may take his success in his hands and do it again. This is time when he should rely on the advice of his accompanist unless he himself is not too flushed by this success to remain complete master of his senses and a competent judge of the situation. It is a difficult decision to make, and the only rule is to pass on to the next song when there is the slightest doubt as to what to do. Long slow songs should not be repeated under any circumstances, no matter how big the reception; this kind of song just does not bear it, the audience seldom means it that way, and even where it does, the singer can't afford it anyway.



Instruments

Playing for an instrumentalist is in practically every conceivable way a horse of a different color. The pianist enjoys far greater scope of instrumental development and freedom of movement than he is usually given with a singer; the common instrumental basis on which he meets his partner is a firmer and wider one, and there are generally more intriguing outlets and opportunities for showing off his technical mastery. This goes, *nota bene*, for the chamber music type of composition—sonatas, suites, and other pieces composed for two equally important instruments.

Casting a quick glance on the less inviting part of the repertory, where the accompaniments furnish little more than the minimum harmonic and rhythmical background for a solo piece, the foremost duty of the pianist is to stay right back there with the insignificant music that has fallen to his share. To synchronize the acrobatics of *rubatissimo* outpourings of the solo instrument with the modest occasional burps of the piano to the split thirty-second, being precise but not incisive, and offering the incidental cues on a barely noticeable doily instead of the proverbial silver platter, seems to circumscribe his thankless job.

The sad thing is that many instrumentalists are inclined to adopt this same outlook and treatment in chamber music works, even including among them sonatas that were literally composed and published as sonatas for the piano

with violin. There reigns an almost universal terror among instrumentalists in regard to the piano. Not quite unfounded possibly, considering the relative size and tonal volume of the instruments involved, which is also materially more differing today than 100 or 150 years ago. Nevertheless, you would think that a pianist deemed good enough to be entrusted with the task of playing sonatas, would generally be given credit for enough sense of tonal balance and artistic responsibility not to cover, accidentally or deliberately, the weaker instrument. But that is unfortunately a rare occurrence. As a rule, his dynamic scale and range of color are muzzled by keeping the piano lid tightly closed, and the *f* - *ff* markings in his score are watered down to *mp* - *mf*. The mechanical adjustment of volume that is achieved hereby could be accepted in principle for classical sonatas where a weaker and less colorful piano sound would be defensible on historical grounds. If, on the other side, one stops to consider the relative importance of the piano part with that of the violin in a Mozart or Beethoven sonata, it must be clear that within those narrower limits the pianist should be given free rein to assert himself – not as a person, of course, but as the executant of the piano part. A good artist – and only good artists should be playing sonatas – can be depended on not to transgress into dynamic ranges his partner can't match; with a little more confidence from the side of the over-apprehensive soloist, we shall – I hope – be able to get away gradually from the all too frequent experience of hearing somebody play subdued accompaniments to the string part of a sonata.

As to the problems attending the coordination between piano and string or wind instruments, we may point to certain parallels that can be established between them and those concerning a voice-piano team. Here, as there, the pianist must take into account certain limitations resulting from peculiarities of execution — *id est*, the length of the bow and of the human breath. We have dealt with the latter at some length, and the same conclusions apply, generally speaking, to the sung as to the blown phrase — but there are a few remarks anent hairs and strings which I'd like to make.

The fact that a skilled string player can change his stroke more rapidly and smoothly than the most accomplished singer or woodwind player can catch a breath, puts a greater burden of perfect phrasing on the former. If it is permissible, or at least excusable, to tackle the phrasing problem in terms of single-breath lengths, it is very apprehensible to do the same with bow lengths. It is a frequently encountered error, and an unnecessary limitation of the fiddler's expressive powers, to confuse bowing with phrasing. Too many instrumentalists get [so?] wrapped up in the intricacies of how best to solve a compound bowing and fingering problem, that the greater musical design is either just neglected or even entirely distorted. This is naturally bound to happen in instances where the composer did not conceive of music in the spirit and character of the particular instrument, but rather allotted a certain share of the entire [___?] to it. Yet even in those works where intimate knowledge of the instrument, of its character and technique have been the godparents of a violin or cello part, there is always the

temptation to express and phrase in units of up and down strokes, as the changing amount of pressure between nut and tip produces a natural *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. To resist this urge is as valiant an accomplishment as the suppression of the stereotyped swelling at the beginning of a sustained singing tone.

To think, phrase and play entirely according to the greater musical concept, to subordinate instrumental effects and tendencies to the overall design, is in both cases the most desirable, if also the most difficult thing.

I will not presume here to enter on a discussion of instrumental problems other than the pianist's; they occasionally have loomed on the horizon during the detailed rehearsing of a violin or cello program, and many is the hair I have split gratuitously if pleasantly when I ventured, uninvited as often as invited, to offer superior advice to my long suffering partner.

There is, however, one thing about which I have always felt very strongly and shall continue to fight all comers, and that is that the indiscriminate use of harmonics and open strings where not expressly indicated. It is simply inconceivable to me why the radically different sound of an open string or harmonic should be introduced, or rather intruded, anywhere in the course of a melodic line, just because it is apparently the easiest or safest way to handle a purely technical problem of intonation or fingering. I certainly don't want to sit on a high horse. I am ready to admit that in certain extreme cases the help of such a harmonic in an exposed range is nearly indispensable, but what gets me is the brazenness with which it so

often interrupts the homogeneous continuity of sound where there is not the slightest cause or excuse for it from technical necessity. I'd just as soon have a singer or a fiddler whistle a tone in the middle of a phrase – the difference to my ear couldn't be more startling. There are certain noteworthy instances where a harmonic is made an integral part of a development, and moreover where it is created in the spirit of the instrument to the extent of appearing in different keys at the same point in the exposition and the reprise, as in the second theme of the first movement of the Mendelssohn concerto. But there are exceptions, both by virtue of their strategic position and by being expressly so marked by the composer; in the overwhelming majority of cases these circumstances do not prevail, and it is preposterous to assume that a composer could have desired such an effect at any time when a melody happens to cross the magnetic field of an open string or harmonic.

Leave Our Piano Notes for Pure Pitch in Violin!

Having thus given vent to my pet peeve, I turn with a less perturbed mind to another characteristic of the string playing which is likely to get in the way of musically correct phrasing: the slide. This is so intimately tied up in the individual player's ideas of proper procedure when changing positions, it is so much part of a whole school of thought in violinistic esthetics, that I am conscious of treading on very thin ice here. Let us then just say that much can be achieved to everybody's satisfaction, by holding to a happy medium wherever this question

arises, and by trying to contain this in the minimum confines of a necessary evil where only exigencies of fingering are responsible for it.

Returning to minding my own, *id est* the pianist's business again, there is a suggestion concerning the performance of pre-classical music: to leave out, wherever structure and setting permit it, the duplication in unison especially, but also in octaves, of any tone the fiddler plays. The latter has the capacity, as well as the tendency, to produce pure intervals rather than the well-tempered ones to which the piano is limited, and the pleasure for player and listener alike will be enhanced by re-instituting the true scales and chords in music which was composed to be thus performed. This is obviously a luxury which must be abandoned before we get to Mozart or Beethoven, from which point only string ensembles may further indulge in such delights. This is, however, just one reason for making the most of an opportunity while the simpler, more flexible piano parts of an earlier period allow it.

The playing of more complicated scores, such as sonatas and assorted chamber music, while infinitely more stimulating and rewarding from a pianistic point of view, brings with it the indispensable presence of the page turner, about the unhappiest, most thankless and nerve-racking musical job there is. From the pianist's angle, I wonder whether it not be preferable to have a tone-deaf musical illiterate perform this service, turn the pages mechanically at a nod or kick in the shin from the player. Too often the individual temperament of the page-turner influences his reaction, and you find the one waiting

stubbornly till you have finished the last bar before letting you in on the signal, whereas the other extreme, racing nervously ahead of you, leaves you to play a line or two or even half a page from memory. Since the pianist is apt to know his stuff half from memory anyway by the time he plays it in public, the consequences of such impatiences should not be too catastrophic, but I remember several narrow escapes. This, however, does not detract from the fact that it is actually the page turner who deserves most of the available sympathy. Anxious not to breathe down the pianist's neck nor to impede the latter's access to the lowest reaches of the keyboard, he will teeter on the edge of a chair which is usually given to creaking at each deep breath from its occupant. He will tense his muscular system in the middle of every other page for the perfectly timed and perfectly soundless turning of the leaf, and strain his balancing powers in trying to regain pose number one of relative relaxation on the razor's edge. The keener his participation in and potential appreciation of the performance is, the more disappointing and frustrating his impressions as a page turner are bound to be; this I know from my own experience, too, so my plea for sympathy with his lot carries an unimpeachable double-edged authority.

A last hint concerns the guidance that comes from the piano to the tuning and retuning of the violin or cello. This is strictly destined for the fiddler's ear alone and not a musical treat for the audience, occasional appearances to the contrary. Special restraint must be exercised for the sometimes inevitable tuning between movements of a sonata or suite, not only in keeping the volume down to

minimum requirements, but particularly in waiting an appropriate time after the close of the preceding movement – there is nothing as exasperating as the sudden rude impact of the d-minor triad on an ear that still reverberates with the echo of the music barely finished.


These may be trifling matters, hardly worth mentioning in print – but repeated experiences in all these respects make me believe that too much stress cannot be laid on the observation of such niceties, and I shall feel that this book has served its purpose whenever it should inspire an extra handshake of thanks in the eye of the public to pass between pianist and page turner, or an extra three-or-four seconds to have elapsed before retuning.

To jump down from the near-ridiculous to the near-sublime: what has been said about the exacting requirements of teamwork between singer and accompanist goes *eo ipso* for the combination of a pianist and another instrumentalist. Here the ideal musical coordination of the two players is not influenced by the mighty deflective forces of the spoken word, nor are the restrictions of an extra-musical nature put on the device of extreme tempi or the accuracy of rhythm, the uninterrupted flow of long phrases or the placement and intensity of accent. In one word, the musical purist's heaven – and there we shall leave him for the time being.



Languages

Original Language vs. Translation

ince it will be a long time before an adequate portion of standard repertory will be available in really good translation, the majority of it will be presented in the original language. Particularly by foreign-born artists who would be doubly reluctant to sing their own literature in anything but the original, as well as by the native singers who realize that the ideal combination and interrelationship of word and music are only obtainable there. As against this, there is the undeniable appeal to any audience that comes from being sung to in its own language, a profit that for the larger part of the audience well outweighs the loss of accuracy and subtlety in the translation.

All these home truths about which fountains of ink and gall have been spilled, the aspect that interests us here is solely how the singer may best face the hydra of a multilingual assignment. The ideal solution would naturally be an intimate knowledge of all languages and even special idioms performed – but that is a dream that even in these days of ever increasing interest and prowess in foreign languages is not likely to be realized in but a few instances. Therefore let us rather concern ourselves with the lowest permissible limits about which there seems to be too much uncertainty around. To state the main issue: it is not enough to pronounce the text with the meticulous

care of a Berlitz School teacher, without knowing the meaning of each word. Too many singers are content to have a rough idea what the words are all about, and then trust to the musical indications for purposes of detailed interpretation. It should be quite patent that no self-respecting authoritative performance is possible in this case, and that in order to achieve it the singer must know the literal meaning of his text. Moreover, he must not be content to have gone through that once, sometime in the earlier course of his studies, he must rather be aware of it in detail at the moment of singing. Only then can he work properly on an integration of word and tone to the limits of his intellectual and expressive powers.

This is no mean task, and it is easy to understand that many singers are tempted to settle for a less exigent interpretation of their duties as well as of their songs, especially so in view of the fact that their labors are seldom apt to be appreciated by more than a handful in the audience. On the other hand, the security and strength of conviction which the artist gains for his performance, is not to be discounted – It makes for a very pronounced difference from the widespread all-purpose expressive attitude which but thinly covers a gaping vacancy of thought and feeling, a difference which is perceptible even to those who do not understand the foreign language. The singer should also be cautioned against applying the printed translation in these labors; not only is it impossible to adhere to the original in the same syntactical order, but we often find that the sentences of the original have been rather freely transcribed so that they will sometimes give insufficient clues as to the original text and intent. These

are by no means the worst translation, on the contrary it is the wise translator who on certain occasions eschews the too close following where the spirit of the English language would suggest a different way of putting it, to achieve a certain meaning. More reason then to get a first hand blow-by-blow explanation of the original text.

The following remarks will deal with some problems and idiosyncrasies that constantly crop up in the singing of foreign languages. One of the most important characteristics to watch for the Anglosaxon singer is the uniformity of vowel sound in other languages. Speaking in mixed vowels or diphthongs where there is only one vowel in print is an exclusive peculiarity of the English tongue, and the singer will have to guard against the tendency to pronounce similarly outside his own language. But even where he has passed this hurdle, there is more to be done with respect to clarity, simplicity and intensity of vowel, well beyond the standards required in spoken English. If we accept the premise that the perfect vowel is the ideal carrier of perfect tone, then there should be no limit to the labors to be lavished on the production of the perfect vowel. I do not intend here to meddle in matters that rightfully are the voice teacher's domain, beyond stating that this is a highly rewarding endeavor in most any language but the English, with Italian ranking first, while German and French are running close seconds in a dead heat. The very act of constantly mixing, diphthonging and generally changing the consistency of a vowel in English makes it nearly impossible to arrive at the desirable maximum of clarity and intensity; it also keeps many singers from realizing how much more in this direction

can be achieved. Outstanding examples would be the A (in Italian mainly), the various umlaut O's in French and last not least the U and Ü in German. This last vowel, the only one that is not contained in the otherwise complete English vowel gamut, presents particular difficulties in pronunciation – and the only offerable consolation lies in the fact that not only Anglosaxon singers, but others, of most any tongue, have to struggle hard to pronounce it – not just an Ü, not just a singable Ü, but the perfect “Ü-est” of all Ü's. All of which goes to a large extent also for the U-sound – especially again in a language like German where a lot of expression and onomatopoeic value is connected with the pronunciation and deft underlining of characteristic vowels. To quote but a few sterling examples: “*Dunkel, wie dunkel*” from Brahms' *Von Ewiger Liebe*, “*Zur Ruh, zur Ruh*” Wolf – or “*Ruhn in Frieden*” Schubert – *wie wohl tust du*, end of Brahms serious song 3 – and so on, truly *ad infinitum*.

Even though I could go on for pages holding forth in this pet subject of mine, this is quite obviously a thing that can only be fully grasped in actual experience, in actual patient experimenting with the minutest adjustments of all contributing factors in the production of any vowel until the optimum is reached. A principle that I keep repeating *ad infinitum, id est ad nauseum*, wherever I find a friendly ear, is that no singer should be satisfied with any particular vowel until and unless he may tell himself truthfully he couldn't pronounce it more clearly, cleanly and roundly. This is admittedly a tall order, but the dividends in pure sound, of sheer vocal beauty are such that no effort could be called too great. It is just a matter of estab-

lishing higher standards of vowelization or vowel placement – actually the highest imaginable standards – and the requisite controls to get the tone and keep it there, according to the idea that here too the very best is just about good enough.

A peculiarity of German spelling vs. pronouncing is – among many others to be sure – the suffix “*ig*”. Goethe and his contemporaries rhyme unconcernedly *ig* and *ich*, something no self-respecting poet would do nowadays – But this proves to us that there is a good historical foundation for the softening of the end consonant as it is practiced today. This should however not be indulged in without restraint, particularly where no problem in rhyming exists – This should rather be subject to tempo, mood and individual significance of the word concerned. A soft (“*ich*”) ending is certainly recommended for words like “*heilig*” holy, “*traurig*” sad, “*selig*” blissful, etc. in the appropriate context and slow tempo, whereas “*lustig*” gay, “*hurtig*” fast, and words or similar character obviously call for the hard pronunciation. These concepts will be further influenced by the syntactical position and phonetical surroundings of the syllable in question, the pitch and duration of the note on which it is sung, etc. In short, common sense will have to find the proper decision here, as in so many other cases where hard and fast rules don’t or shouldn’t exist.



On Accidents

Accidents will happen – to the experienced performer just as likely as to the beginner; the difference – a most important one – lies only in the reaction and the treatment. The singer may

- a) blow a fuse on a high note
- b) have a leak on a low one

The pianist may

prominently exceed his contractual quota of wrong notes

play the wrong song

the right song in the wrong key

all those things nearly calculated to throw his soloist more effectively off the track.

The fiddler may

- a) hit an involuntary harmonic
- b) have a string uncoil itself from a slippery peg to an unmanageable pitch

The music may

- a) stick together
- b) get tired of just leaning against the rack and launch into a graceful tailspin to the floor at a crucial moment or

c) may indulge in a playful hide-and-seek as its pages waft to and fro on a drafty stage. Spotlights may hiss and footlights blink, the piano stool may squeak, and ashtrays, pencils, coins and other objects that have wormed their way into the innermost privacy of the piano set up their own orchestral effects. There is that insistent telephone in the manager's office which tries to keep time for the musicians on the stage when they least need it, and there is the buzzing and stinging winged fauna which enlivens matters in its own sweet ways – and so on *ad nauseum*.

There is one general rule to be followed – the music, like the mails, must get through, and it devolves on the performer's ingenuity, *sang froid*, and stage presence to see to this. The first impulse on missing a cue or getting otherwise lost is too often a panic-stricken pulling up and stopping in the middle of a piece. This of course establishes a major catastrophe beyond a doubt for even the most unobserving listener and should be avoided, unless things have gotten so disorganized that further attempts to stem the tide of evil are out of the question. But even in the most extreme case of open fracture, the artist will mostly have the audience's sympathy and forbearance on his side; as a matter of fact such a *contretemps* usually benefits the contact between him and his listeners; they like to witness some frailty that stresses the human side in the idol behind the footlights, and they are quick to appreciate the humorous side of the situation without taking it out on the artist, provided he is game.



Recitativ

This term embraces a wide variety of musical styles, all of which occur abundantly in the vocal literature, from the grave *accompagnato* of Gluck's via the *secco* of Mozart's operas to the subtlest *derivatives* and developments of either which we find in the song literature from Schubert on down to the present. Anent the operatic *recitativo* there is one major temptation to be guarded against: and that is to abandon any concern for the rhythmic pattern in which it is presented. The term "R" which so often is thus interpreted, to me is an indication of a declamatory style and generally tightened emphasis on speech, which by no means should impinge on proper observance of rhythmic values. A certain largesse would be in place in the pure *parlando* passages where the obvious conversational character suggests independence from meticulous differentiation between eighths and sixteenths, especially in a translation, but the more we move toward the emotionally charged "R", be it the lyric, philosophic or dramatic kind, the more we have to watch for detail in the composer's intentions, as expressed in rhythmic characterization. Closer study of the latter will reveal not only in the scores of titans like Gluck and Mozart, but of considerably lesser composers, that much thought and care has been given to the coordination of word and tone emphasis, and that only in rare cases it will be necessary to change any specific rhythmic sequence. Another no less frequent mistake in "R"-singing is an overall vagueness and ambiguity in rhythm where

no deliberate change is attempted. This tends to watering down the musical and generally emotional contents, its impact and significance – an irreparable loss poorly compensated by the greater comfort in vocal movement.

To look at the positive side of things for a moment, the “R”, if anything, rather tends to increase awareness and execution of rhythmic pattern, since with the temporary dismissal of formal periodicity and organized melodic line the rhythmic factor of necessity advances to the first position of importance in the artistic set-up. The intrinsic strength which is derived from rhythmic utterance alone regardless of literary or musical connotation, is a particularly vital factor in the “R” and it will usually be to the singer’s advantage to stay as close as possible to the printed original, including not only the relative note values in each individual phrase, but being equally precise about the rests between them. The metric continuity which here replaces the melodic and structural ones, is of great help in preserving the artistic unity of otherwise often diffuse and disconnected elements. Wherever a broadening of the tempo is indicated or implied, covering a whole phrase or only part of it, the singer should be as meticulous about retaining the relative tone values within its scope, as outside the R. All these considerations are offered in connection with Rs found in Schubert’s *Dem Unendlichen*, *Nachtstück*, Beethoven’s *Ah Perfido*, the last song in Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und Leben* cycle, to cite only a few noble examples, as indeed with respect to the whole operatic, oratorio and cantata literature from Monteverdi and Bach down to our age. The experienced artist will exempt from such treatment passages whose rhyth-

mic subdivision has merely been dictated by the conventional notation of Rs in 3/4 or 4/4 measures and follow no inherent dramatic concept; he will likewise on special occasions take it upon himself to adapt the rhythm to a different speech pattern of a translation, redistributing single values while retaining the rhythmic characteristics. This however belongs in another chapter and is quoted here only for the sake of completeness.



Breathing

To the interested reader who, never leaving a stone unturned, should look in this accompanist's book of all places, for new startling information or illumination under this heading, my humble apologies.

There are certain fundamentals of singing, few of them to be sure, but there are such as I shall respectfully leave outside my contemplation, grateful and happy as an avowed and fervent non-singer and non-diver that my own concern with this problem of problems has never had to reach beyond that of the average man.

There are however two things which I want to stress in this context: the first one, that it is not wise, nor even practical, to sacrifice one's notion of the proper tempo of a phrase or a whole song, or the requisite intensity of expression, to the ambition of singing a phrase, any phrase, in one breath. It is not wise, because such pulmonary prowess has little to do with one's artistic gifts, and is much too often displayed in lieu of [shorter?], however subdivided, phrasing that might retain and even increase the logical sequel of word and tone. The possible gain of a long-breathed phrasing is definitely offset not only by loss in unity and truth of tempo and expression, but also by the fact that under the stress and strain of public performance the singer will often notice that what he could accomplish with moderately, or perceptibly increased speed at home, he can't reproduce on the concert stage. At the crucial moment he will face the alternative of fur-

ther increasing the speed of that particular phrase, now entirely out of proportion with the sense and structure of the whole song, or of catching a breath as catch can — neither solution attractive, artistic or successful.

Therefore such a way to expedite long phrases is also unsafe and impractical. It is infinitely more preferable to face one's physical limitations honestly and to allow enough margin for error in concert performance. The exact Where for the breath inside the phrase is a matter of adjusting musical and word syntax, which should offer little difficulty to the sensitive student; the How consists mainly in making a definite virtue of necessity, namely connecting rather than separating two phrase elements by breathing in such a way that the intake of air becomes an integral part of the intellectual and emotional message. This implies that said intake may be visible or near invisible, such as skill and special expressive intention of the singer suggest.

[Missing pages? — CAM]



Interpretation

*French Interpretation*⁵

For a better understanding of the different principles that underlie French song composition and interpretation, we must for a moment dwell on a fundamental difference of French poetry and declamation from that of most other tongues. The distinction between short and long, accentuated and unaccentuated syllables which provide the rhythmical elements of any language is neglected in French practice to such a degree that we may safely say it is almost non-existent for the purposes of translation into musical values. True enough, there are certain recommendations rather than rules which apply to scanning and emphasis of any line in a French poem, but the desultory attention or complete disregard they encounter in musical settings suggests that they are of inferior importance. To quote just one famous example: the article “*le*” in the beginning of Mignon’s aria “*Connais-tu le pays*” falls on the highest note in the moment of greatest musical tension, on the first beat of the second bar, in short, on the place of honor within this phrase. As an isolated occurrence this would be altogether too insig-

⁵ Though labeled as a chapter in the typescript, this section appears clearly to have been intended as an inclusion within a larger chapter on *Interpretation*, rather than a chapter of its own. A separated section called *Interpretation* is also in the typescript, but begins, as footnoted at the beginning of it, below, as if in the middle of a thought, and therefore it seems to me more appropriate to place it after this partial discussion of interpretation, though that may not have been the original intent at all.

nificant to mention and furthermore comparable in principle, if not in degree, to similar passages from Schubert to Brahms. But this treatment is symptomatic for French song composition at large; therefore we must conclude that language and music, while having a natural and sometimes very close bearing on each other, are deliberately kept at a certain distance from each other, though it can not always be called a respectful one.

Another curiosity is the frequent lack of variety and contrast of consonant combinations in rhyming syllables which however is not as obvious in the sung phrase as in the spoken line. All these phenomena seem to point in the general direction that the phonetical or musical side of poetry is of less interest to French poetry and vocal composition than elsewhere. On the other hand, there are at least two factors that distinguish it, in poesy as in prose, and that is its extraordinary fluency of phrase and lucidity of expression. The first is naturally aided by the suppression of subdividing rhythmical accents; the second, while of no intrinsic musical significance, is unparalleled in exact definition of intellectual and emotional nuances. It has thus served as the language of diplomacy and philosophy par excellence; it has thus also become the perfect tool for the delineation and coloring of subtlety and transition, particularly in the half-shadow of the subconscious, which V.B.M. and others have drawn into their field of poetic vision and projection. France has, like every great musical culture, produced songs throughout its development, but it is really in the work of Fauré and Debussy that the essence of French vocal culture is crystallized in purity. The great formal gifts of the former, the

instrumental genius of the latter have presented us with dozens of songs of irresistible and inimitable vocal and harmonic beauty. If I content myself with mentioning Chabrier, Duparc, Ravel, Hahn and Poulenc in addition, it is to draw the main line of development down to the present, without qualification of artistic merits intended.

So much for the material, and now to its presentation. Here we must realize that the French attitude and approach towards interpretation is hardly less fundamentally different than in its treatment of word and tone.

Maybe because the language is so much clearer that the singer is less hard put to in finding and transmitting the proper nuance, maybe because the classic ideal of controlling the display of emotion is more strongly rooted in the French concept of esthetics, quite probably because of a combination of these two with other contributory factors – at any rate, the French artist does not go all out, or anywhere near the extreme in possible expression or intensity of feeling. This should not be taken for a loss in immediate human appeal. It rather presents a different concept and application of the performer-audience relationship. To my mind, apart from previous consideration, there is a compliment implied in a manner of performance which leaves it to the listener to arrive at an individually modified degree of intensity and emotional experience.

This, from a broader point of view, goes for any performance however intense and specified to the last imaginable detail – but there is quite a definite difference in scope, as obvious and significant as it is deliberate.

The decisive proof of this fact which had been very slow in superceding a uniformly intense approach to any interpretation on my part, came in a season when within a short period of time I had the opportunity of rehearsing French songs with a German singer and German lieder with a French singer. They both were undisputed authorities of interpretation in their native tongues, I should add. Cross-referencing the characteristics of their approach to each other's literature gave me invaluable information and confirmation as to the basic difference in principle in treatment which I tried to outline briefly in this chapter.

Finally, I should like to say that this apparent self-limitation, originating in stylistic rather than personal considerations, will bring new variety and contrast to any program, provided the performer is able and willing to bring out such intriguing fine points. From these premises two conclusions may be drawn. The more imbued German and French singers become with the expressive characteristics of their native language, the more outstanding they become as artistic and personal representatives of the native backgrounds, the more they will tend and be expected to perform in a manner that corresponds with this heritage; either vocal literature offers so wide a range of masterpieces that to study, absorb and perform them would easily consume an entire career. What little scope might be left for the presentation of other cultures, would necessarily be the more tinged by such powerful "generic" influences the more definitely and highly their artistic individuality is developed. Looking at this problem from the different angle, we recognize a blessing in

such a jumbling of styles, inasmuch as it throws a greater variety of light and weight on the subject matter of the performance and thereby achieves, though half involuntarily, new feats of undeniable artistic value and interest.

The other conclusion is that the English- or American-born singer is in this regard at a slight advantage. Being in his generally cultural and linguistic make-up at a comparable distance from both French and German types, he may enjoy a more neutral point of view and approach for closer examination of either, an advantage however which is more than sufficiently offset by the necessity of acquiring an intimate knowledge of two alien linguistic cultures instead of one. The regional native lore of the English-speaking people easily matches in richness, attractiveness, and variety anything other nations have to offer. On the other hand we must admit that for reasons outside the scope of these contemplations, comparatively little of significance was written during the decades when French and German song composition reached its heights. Perhaps the omnipresent shadow of a "We are not Pleased" discouraged unconventional flights of imagination, especially those with a progressive freedom of expression in matters erotic, or otherwise not quite recommended for elaboration in public. Whatever the reason, we are faced with a palpable dearth of important English songs until fairly recent age. This is not meant as a disparagement *per se* of English song composition, where just as in the French or German developments irregular tides of prominence and insignificance alternate. The English songs of and before the Elizabethan era are among the most beautiful and enduring vocal creations

that Europe produced at any time, and ample proof of inherent native endowment. The ever increasing number of excellent contemporary songs goes far toward establishing the English artsong on a competitive level with that of the other nations, and last not least in a position that in itself represents the true standard of English language and poetry.

The performer of the contemporary English song will find more freedom for the display of personal taste, since there are hardly any considerations of precedent, tradition, style, or mere historical distance to prod him, however gently, into established channels of procedure. The form and contents, position and psychology of the artsong has not changed perceptibly since Wolf and Debussy carried it to individual perfection. What we are concerned with since then, is the interpretation in a like spirit of a more or less eclectic or generally diffuse type of form in the more or less individually discernible idioms of various composers. I hasten to state that this goes for modern songs in all languages, and is again not to be construed as an intended slight on contemporary composition. It is merely the outcome of two facts: that the artsong has reached its highest degree of fulfillment in the past, and that the present internationalization of musical form, thought and expression is about to put an end to separately recognizable developments.

Before I leave matters of interpretation to their well deserved rest, I ought to mention two large groups of song composers which have justly maintained an important place beside the three previously commented on: the Scandinavians and the Slavs.

The circumstance that strong elements of folksong and dance have so penetrated the larger part of their artsongs Mussorgsky – Dvorak – Grieg – ?, puts their interpretation on a somewhat different basis. This influence or characteristic trait is in many instances the safest, if not the sole pointer for appropriate performance, as all matters of word accent, emotional shading and individual musical expression appear as subordinated to a clearly periodicized and rhythmically uniform pattern. The normal solution would therefore be to bring only so much personal expression into focus as does not conflict with the simple allover musical design, even where the text would demand greater intensity and individual attention. Much greater freedom in this respect is generally provided in the songs of Mahler, as many of whom are leaning heavily on the implied simplicity and broad sentiment of the folksong type and to this day make their appraisal as *bona fide* artsongs a hotly contested issue. Mahler has left no uncertainty, in his oral teaching and written marking, as to how he wanted his songs performed; a high pitch of intensity and an unusually wide scale of dynamics lavished on thematic material that often borders on the trivial, combine to a curious mixture of pseudo-sophistication and unabashed heartiness which requires more than the customary quota of conviction and good taste on the part of the interpreter. This is not to be taken as belittling his work. I have always had the special love and respect of the Viennese-born and -bred musician, and which has not dimmed in the more objective atmosphere of my new country. But it is pertinent to warn the performer of the special problem in singing, and playing, Mahler – Not too hectic and overwrought on the

one side, but on the other, for Heaven's sake, not too folksy!

Very different is the situation when it comes to Brahms' German folksongs. Here we have the original melody retained and furnished with a typically Brahmsian setting which establishes these songs somewhere midway between adorned folklore and the artificial creations of Mahler. The better the singer resists the temptation of imbuing the lines with a lot of emotional detail and intensity, the more appealing his singing will be.

And somewhere in between these two extremes as far as art is concerned stands the work of Bela Bartok. It is almost unthinkable to present the vocal part of his folksong transcriptions concerned as simply as their origin suggests. He has written such masterly and absorbing pieces of independent and intriguing piano accompaniment that they often overshadow word and melody. At the most the tune can be said to wander through the song as a somewhat erratic *cantus firmus*.

Bartok's free use of different tonalities for different verses seems to suggest an equally free mode of interpretation of the vocal part. Great attention should therefore be directed to the deft underlining of metric unity and simplicity in the vocal line, since this will be the strongest tie between it and the often complicated rhythms of the piano part.

I have dwelled on these various presentations of folk music to such an extent because of the delicate variations in the style of interpretation involved. Needless to say, there are other types of transcription or incorporation of

folk tunes into artsong proper or some hybrid form that combines elements of both. At any rate the singer will have to be well aware of the congenital difference in meaning and appeal between them, to find the exactly corresponding shade or blend for the individual variety.

It is not enough to cut down generally on intensity of expression, dynamics and other externals to maintain an artificial simplicity and aloofness. There are many artsongs which have the same outer appearance of utter simplicity in every possible musical and poetic aspect, yet they are far from being folksongs. The important difference to my mind seems to be that the artsong is the expression of a single personal experience; whether it depicts a mood, and event, or a combination of both, it is the mental and emotional product of an individual, fictitious and variable but finite and unique as representing the trinity of poet, composer and interpreter.

The folksong implies and involves a state of mind that conceives of its contents as an impersonal, timeless and nearly spaceless continuum. It is the condensation as well as generalization of all pertinent experiences that all people have had at all times; even where it seems to concern a definite event it is the corporate memory of many generations focused in this song, its drama rather heightened than lessened by absorption into the cumulative consciousness of a nation. Its continuous presence as a living ingredient in a people's psyche, so to speak, has sharpened rather than dulled the impact on the individual listener, but by implication, not interpretation. This is why the singer must leave the mellow patina of the true folksong undisturbed. The latter term applies equally to

songs where we happen to know the name of the poet or composer, and which nevertheless have become, through gradual adoption and absorption by a whole people, its legitimate property.

⁶This method also restores and insures needed balance between degrees of attention that customarily are paid to word and music. This goes particularly for that most important and rewarding part of the literature where the dramatic epic or poetical contents are of an artistic and intensity level comparable to that of the music. There the composer has striven not only to mirror the general situation, background and mood of a poem, but [has] gone into a detailed musical illustration and elaboration of its component and successive features. The resulting blending and interweaving of word and tone, the constant interdependence of poetical and melodic line and rhythm, the matching and contrasting of literary and musical accents as achieved first and foremost in the German Lied, as later to a varying degree the song composition of other musical cultures, are impossible to reproduce without the most meticulous study of both text and music. Too often does it happen that a student takes the former just as a convenient traditional means of generally indicating or explaining the scope and trend of the music on hand with little or no reference at all to the inseparable simultaneous development of word and tone. There are needless to say compositions, very beautiful ones and masterpieces in their own right, where this close parallel has not been in-

⁶ Here begins the section labeled *Interpretation* in the typescript.

tended, such as most of the vocal solo music before the flowering of the German Lied. This includes the vast treasures of the classic Italian aria, the Bach aria and the operatic aria of the type that culminates in Mozart's dramatic creations, to name the outstanding representatives of a different artistic principle. They have one distinguishing mark in common: the relative shortness of their texts, whose lines repeat themselves over and over again, as the music develops into a larger concept of its own. We find in many instances that conventional versifications of the simplest sentiments have been a sufficiently potent stimulus for the creation of some of the most beautiful and deeply moving music. Whether in one extreme the latter is primarily designed to offer the voice the most ample and variegated playground to unfold all its instrumental splendor and skill as in the classic aria or in the other one follows with the subtlest imaginable expressive means the various meanings and colorings of the same few words, as in the Bach *Kantatas*, there exists a distinct and well definable relation between word and tone which must be brought out in performance. The number of famous examples that would fall into the first category mentioned, is legion. From the mildly florid variety of the early Italian aria to the most hair-raising excrescences of the coloratura style that later generations produced, the accent and interest lies mainly and often quite exclusively on the purely instrumental and preferably acrobatic qualities of the voice. The underlying text [may?] frequently be replaced by random quotations from a cookbook or time table or stamp catalogue⁷ for all

⁷ My father was an avid stamp collector.

the actual bearing they have on the music. As a matter of fact, the setting of suitable excerpts from such hitherto neglected literary sources has of late found serious and enthusiastic advocates in a small but distinguished group of contemporary composers. To judge by the loving care and detailed attention that is sometimes bestowed on the musical penetration of these texts, it would appear that I gravely insulted their artistic merits by placing them on a level with the average aria text of two or three hundred years ago.

To do more than mention the contrasting position the word occupies in the Bach aria, would go beyond the scope of this book. It is an intricate and ever-engrossing problem that challenges all the technical, intellectual and stylistic resources of the performer well beyond the efforts that are usually required in this respect. The interpreter who looks for information and spiritual stimulation in overcoming the difficulties of Bach's vocal style, is reverently referred to Albert Schweitzer's magnificent elucidation of this complexity of questions. It is no mere coincidence that the average concert singer eschews Bach's music; the assumption that the general public objects to being exposed to this kind of music, has long proved false, to wit the fact that whenever and wherever it is presented with due observation of all requirements for proper performance, the reception by the audience was always overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

Between these two extremes hovers the balance of the literature that antedates the romantic development of the 19th century. Compared to the greater interpretive demands of the latter, it is safe to say that in attention to de-

tail as well as in intensity of expression it holds to a happy medium. It is equally safe to say that his happy medium is usually underrated or entirely neglected. Particularly in gems like *Plaisir D'Amour*, *O del mio dolce ardor*, *Come un raggio di sol* and many others too numerous to mention, it is utterly disappointing to be almost invariably shortchanged by singers who elsewhere offer undeniable proof of considerable artistic maturity. There are many singers that have been in the habit of inserting a group of old Italian arias as a traditional ingredient in their repertory but don't know or bother about the language, and are satisfied to endow their performances with a polite amount of vague expression that seems to correspond with the music. They would be surprised or even shocked if they ever took the trouble to get a full translation of *Come Raggio di sol*. To my mind it is one of the supreme achievements for a singer to suggest the tremendous turmoil of feelings, the suppressed anguish and bitterness of the words while remaining in the stylistically correct confines of classic *bel canto*. I certainly do not want to suggest that these and similar arias should be performed with all the stigmata of soul-consuming intensity, as it would be legitimate to expect with a Hugo Wolf lied. My experience with too frantically induced interpreters has frequently been that the resultant atmosphere of supercharged emotion obscured the musical values beyond recognition. But to the sensitive singer there is such a wide scope between disregard and exaggeration of the expressive elements suggested by the words, that there is scarcely any need of laboring this point further. The main idea which we ought to follow with music of this kind and vintage is about this: within the logic and

law of beautiful tone and musical phrasing which should never be jeopardized by extra-musical considerations however tempting, a lot can and should be done to uphold a true, classic balance between form and contents, line and accent, color and intensity in both word and tone.

The particular nearness and preference I have always felt, naturally enough, for the German lied as the product of my native tongue and main object of my work makes it almost as much of a handicap as a privilege to talk about it and some of the inherent problems of its interpretation.

Of the roughly 2,000 songs that have been written by the masters of this form and among which the works of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf present bulk and backbone, history and highlights of achievement, there are several hundreds which constitute the indispensable stock-in-trade of the advanced concert artist.

The form has its own name that cannot without reserve be applied to similar concepts in other languages, and its interpretation follows the inner laws of a development that has not had its like outside its boundaries. In no other culture can we observe for a century or longer the happy phenomenon of a simultaneous flowering to highest perfection of poetry and music. The coexistence and parallel creative activity of genius in either field of artistic expression and their mutual inspiration to ever greater heights of perfection.

The interpreter accordingly faces an unprecedented "*embarras de richness*" of literary and musical beauty, of intellectual and emotional appeal, all justly vying for his

undivided attention and competing and conflicting with each other as to their ultimate rank and place in the working out of each detail. There are instances where the issue appears to be more or less clear-cut, where temporary precedence may be given to a dramatic word accent, or the preservation of the musical line as the case may be. Both those are rather exceptions to confirm the rule that there simply is no rule about it that could be expressed in so many words.

The predominance of the musical factor which we find almost invariably at the beginning of this development, becomes soon as hard to establish as that of the word was in the salad days of the *bel canto*. Instead we are faced with an esthetic tug-of-war, so to speak, between the two of them. It is not so much that they conflict with each other any oftener than they seem to coincide, rather than being combined or creations perfect in their separate world of music and language, it is somehow unthinkable to link and weld together their twice one hundred percent of excellence into the presentation of a new art form which necessarily demands constant and not always easily indicated sacrifices and restrictions on either side, alternating as well as simultaneous.

There is often so much sheer beauty, so much perfection in the structure and sound concentrated in the instrumental part of a song, with or without the vocal line, that the addition of the spoken word, however beautiful in thought and utterance *might be felt / comes almost* as an intrusion. Correspondingly there are poems whose lines have such a definite musical life of their own, well be-

yond the customary tinkling rhymes and tilting rhythms, which virtually defies being set to music.

A famous case in point is Goethe's *Wanderer's Nachtlied*. It is an utterly beautiful, utterly untranslatable poem which I should like to quote here:

[Quote not included – *PSU*]

These lines, irregular in length, rhythm and rhyme, in other words, presenting handicaps in the three most important aspects of fitness for musical setting, have inspired countless composers into repeated attempts to captivate their haunting beauty in melody and harmony. They succeeded in reflecting the half-serene, half-melancholy mood of the poem, but the uniquely musical rhythm and sound of its language was completely destroyed in trying to superimpose more symmetrical musical form and phrase elements on it. I venture to offer these lines again in a slightly different arrangement, in order to bring out the phonetical peculiarities and symmetries hidden in conventional phrasing: Where is the composer to match, let alone improve upon a design of such musicality? From Schubert, who wrote bars of beautiful music under and around it down to Anton R., who concocted a saccharine duet for two voices on this contemplation of a lonely soul – they failed, nobly and less nobly, but they failed.

If this paragraph concerns a problem of artistic creation rather than the reproduction, the bearing it has on the task of the interpreter should be unequivocal. Throughout the length and depth of German lied literature the elements of this inner conflict are persistently to be found,

and with them the need for their deft adjustment towards an esthetically satisfying and emotionally convincing entity.



*Liberties*⁸

Before I proceed to the tackling of this ticklish matter, I should like to state one artistic principle from which I do not like to deviate, the following disquisitions notwithstanding: it should be established first beyond cavil that a certain passage cannot be done the way it is set down by the author to reach the most complete and effective fulfillment of its contents. This is quite a handful, or mouthful, as the case may be, but unless such a brake is applied to the converting urge of the imaginative performer, the following chapter could be misinterpreted as an invitation to unlimited tampering with any detail of a score that does not find favor with somebody's vocal chords or pianistic persuasions.

Having salvaged our conscience, let us look at the various kinds of liberties there are to be taken.

The most obvious subdivision would be changes in the text and changes in the music. The former includes such slight variations as substituting occasionally a more modern expression for an antiquated one; it means the use of different pronouns or word endings when the general context of a poem does not prohibit its adjustment to the sex of a singer. We frequently find alternative versions printed in the score and may assume that this is permissible in similar cases. The advisability of such a step de-

⁸ Author's footnote: "Let it be understood that the term liberty means only any deliberate changes in the score, not its implementation by dynamic and rhythmic nuances not expressly marked."

pende largely on how much can be gained by such changes, and to what length one feels entitled to go in achieving this end. Poems that are too well known and are definitely set in the general mind, had better be treated very reverently, or best be left entirely alone. In the case of a bad translation however, short shrift should be made with any faulty or awkward word or passage, provided of course that the change constitutes an improvement; where it concerns words hallowed by tradition, this improvement must be a very marked one, to counterbalance a considerable risk of popular appeal.

A great deal remains to be done in this respect, since the concern for a halfway acceptable, let alone worthy and true translation of foreign texts, has not been known to trouble publishers, performers or public until fairly recently. It is a moot question to what point any poem can be translated into another language, and what values of the original are those that deserve to be retained in their fullness, at the expense of others. It takes a highly sensitive, imaginative and adaptable mind to attune itself to another one, a superior knowledge of the other's language and idiomatic characteristics, and an equally superior mastery of one's own, to attempt such a task with reasonable prospects of success. Unfortunately, the efforts of most translators have been directed towards versification in first line, neglecting or changing the substance and atmosphere of the poem where it did not easily fit the rhyme. The importance of the latter factor, particularly in the strophic or otherwise well periodicized songs, shall not be belittled, because its contribution is a musical as well as a literary one; but to see sacrificed to it so much

inner meaning and truth in translation as ruthlessly as it appears in the overwhelming majority of literature that has become standardized for lack of better solutions, is a very sad thing indeed. Sadder yet for the incontrovertible fact that the commercial investment in the old, however unsatisfactory, translations is of such magnitude that a change involving new plates is out of the question. Comparison of the few rare exceptions to this rule with the old scores shows that an inspired and devoted translator can accomplish, and by implication [?] what we are still missing in most of the standard vocal literature.

Another liberty frequently met with is the exchange of one word for another on an exposed note, where a certain accumulation of consonants, or an uncomfortable vowel, or a combination of both, interferes with the proper treatment of the tone as such. It is marvelous to behold how one group of singers can sing high sustained notes better on an E, another prefers U, other swear by the A or O—this however is their exclusive problem and as long as they are able to convey tone, word and meaning convincingly, they are *cheerfully / entirely* welcome to finding their own salvation. The books with synonyms for the enlightenment of crossword puzzle addicts should find useful employment in this quest, too.

Where, however, no other vocally more suitable word/vowel is available on such an exposed note, the singer will need to grapple with the problem as originally posed. Concerning this there exist different schools of thought, the purist one in particular intent on absolute clarity and undiluted character of the vowel sound at any cost. I admit that certain voices have both

the natural ability and the technical training that allows them to produce with ease any vowel-consonant combination on any pitch. For the majority however there exist certain difficulties which to my mind should be dealt with gently, and more specifically by judicious qualification of the original vowel or consonant until it interferes no more with the vocal line. This is mostly accomplished by softening the plosive consonants *k, p, t*, into the corresponding voiced ones (*g, b, d*) and by approximating the extreme *oo* and *ee* sounds towards a more neutral or normal sound. Utmost discretion is required in such modification, but provided this is observed, the result is not only acceptable, but in most cases vastly preferable to the ones produced by strict adherence to linguistic precepts. While I am just as much in favor of well-spoken and well-pronounced language as anyone, we must not forget that in singing we are dealing with a combination of speech and music and that compromises are not always avoidable. Let us also try to bear in mind that the meaning of a word, where it doesn't already follow clearly from the context, is mostly determined by its consonants, whose proper articulation will ensure complete understanding. For the rest it stands to reason that if the composer has put musical emphasis, *id est* extreme pitch, on any word or syllable, he expected it to gain the proper expression as much on musical grounds as on linguistic. Which translated into practice means the production and conservation of a well-focused, round tone, even at a partial sacrifice of proper pronunciation. The ersatz-vowel must however be of the same consistency and clearness as the originally intended one, not a half-baked one which broadcasts the singer's embarrassment. This is a very con-

troversial topic and depends entirely on the individual taste and ability of the singer, but for my part I'll gladly settle for any number of Sowgfrieds and Troustans in exchange for well-produced and good ringing high tones.

The last liberty affecting the text that I can think of, concerns the repetition of a word or group of words in the execution of a phrase, where a series of sustained notes or a long florid passage is written over one syllable. Here we must ask ourselves whether the composition permits of the subdivision of a musical phrase, whether the words adapt themselves to a partial repetition that avoids overemphasis and ridicule, and even if both answers are positive, whether the composer's general design does not point rather to the stressing of the instrumental beauty of the melody, even where a long melisma must be interrupted for purposes of breathing. This is an intricate complex of questions – I should say that performers tend in general too much toward filling in of textual snatches, which of course provide an outer [?] and most welcome basis for an extra breath. To my mind it is putting the cart before the horse; as I have mentioned in another context, taking an extra breath does not require such an elaborate excuse.⁹

Chronologically the first liberty to be taken with a score would be the playing of an introduction where none is provided in the score. This will hardly be objectionable in a strophic song that has a postlude, which in turn becomes a transition to the next verse, and therefore can be

⁹ Typescript here has line separating next paragraph, as here.

made to serve as an introduction. Unless the text suggests an *attacca* beginning which is not so likely in the strophic songs, this is preferable to the striking of a chord to give the singer his cue.

Another, more responsible job is the occasional “padding” of the piano part, to adjust its sonority to the desired volume, according to individual capacities in singer, instrument and auditorium, aside from filling in gaps where they exist in scores of the earlier skeleton type. This would not only mean the doubling of chord components, but also the extending of the range in both directions where the composer has obviously been bothered by contemporary limitations of the keyboard. In doing this great care must be exercised not to obliterate any more independent variation that may stand in the reprise in lieu of a mutilated imitation of the original. Often the composer has made a shining virtue of embarrassing necessity, and this must of course not be altered. Every now and then we may come across a song in which the composer was so carried away by the flow of words and music that too little thought was given to the requirements of breathing and breathing spells. That the most convincing impression of breathless excitement can be imparted while giving the singer necessary breaks, is documented by songs like Schubert’s *Rastlose Liebe* and Strauss’ *Cäcilie* – the singing of rapture without respite that we find in Schumann’s *Die Rose, die Lilie* from the *Dichterliebe* cycle, can be managed for short songs like this, but would lead to technical trouble and exhaustion in longer works. Where such a threat is looming and the where the musical and poetic aspects of the setting would permit the in-

sersion of an unobtrusive bar into a long uninterrupted vocal passage, I should not hesitate to oblige the singer. If done with all the requisite circumspection and respect for the original design this is definitely the lesser evil, but I know this suggestion walks on very thin ice, so Handle with Care (of the "utmost" brand).

I have on the other hand always objected to the excision of a bar or two of piano solo in the course of a song when it seemed that the singer just got bored waiting for his next cue, or more politely put, if the singer did not agree with the amount of time and music it took the composer to bridge two vocal statements, whether it was a continuation or a change of mood. Even if I could take no exception to the views on meaning and interpretation of both phrases, he committed a grave error in not adopting the composer's expressly documented way of arriving at his conclusions, and I remember with righteous glee many a lance I broke for this principle. This is of course entirely different from leaving out one, two, or more verses in a strophic song. Unless the accompaniment is interestingly varied, or the textual contents so absorbing that a however repetitive continuity must be preserved, and three verses will mostly suffice, four to five are ample; it remains only to make the most suitable choice. Since epic or dramatic events like *Brüderlied*, *Feinsliebchen*, etc. _____, will have to be presented in their entirety, this concerns mainly mood songs, where three or four verses which offer the most contrasting shades, will offer the most satisfactory solution. There is however a certain danger in bending over backwards to avoid iteration and monotony; one must give always a lot of consideration as

to how much time and how much sheer repetition is necessary to establish a certain mood, and whether this impression will be deepened or weakened by the inclusion of another verse. This is of particular importance in Schubert's *Müller* lieder cycle where there is such an abundance of strophic songs, and where too often for reasons of more expeditious dispatch the leisurely pace of the earlier song sequences is abandoned with the elimination of supposedly superfluous verses. I know that in the case of this cycle it is a concession to the audience and to the established concepts of proper program length. Moreover, if Heine and Schumann could present a poet's love requiring about 20 minutes, one might easily take Schubert to task for lingering about five times longer over a mere miller's lyric feelings, and urge a telescoped presentation wherever feasible. Be that as it may, I am always lamenting the omission of about a dozen verses in the course of this cycle, and think especially that in the last song, with its imperceptible change from *p* to *ppp*, and hardly any ripple in the even flow of the music, its very length and repetitiousness is the most apt, most natural and most moving expression of its emotional contents.

The most extensive series of alterations I have had so far on my agenda and my conscience is a rearrangement of several Biblical songs of Dvorak. The cycle was originally composed in the Czech language, the text being various excerpts from the Psalms. The music is typically Dvorak, which means it has among its characteristics the syncopation that is indigenous to the cadence of the language. The translation into German, which does not adapt itself to this rhythm but in few instances, had to abandon much

of this characteristic, and arrived at a totally different, considerably less attractive retracing of the melodic line. The English translator obviously understood German but not Czech, because he took the German version as his model, and fashioned the English text unfortunately to the de-characterized, de-charmed Germanized vocal part. This might have been acceptable for an Italian or French translation; but the English language that has an organic syncopation comparable to the Czech, favors the original rhythm so much more closely that it is quite inconceivable to me how this could be so flagrantly overlooked. By combining the original with the quotations from the King James edition of the Bible, rather than the less inspired English translation of the German translation of the Czech Bible, I was able to work out an English version that retained as much of the Dvorak spirit and music as could reasonably be expected. In this particular labor of love I was aided by favorable circumstances which might not always obtain, but I am sure that a similar going back to original sources would produce better translations in many other cases where people were too prone to follow the line of least resistance. At any rate, it is great fun.

At the end of this chapter I would mention the liberties that are taken with some of the more substantial postludes to certain songs. The postludes to the two Schumann cycles are so organically and inseparably part of the whole that nobody in his right mind would think of tampering with them, but in songs like Strauss' *Heimliche Aufforderung*, Wolf's *Er ist's* or even *Ich hab in Penna*, audience and singer conspire frequently in the cutting short or complete elimination of what to them is an anticlimactic

afterthought. The compelling force of a high note at the end of a vocal part can be such that applause will break loose, and then all depends on the singer's taste in weighing his responsibility towards the music against the unavoidable watering down of his personal success. If necessary, the singer can by requesting silence and attention with an appropriate gesture, insure the completion of the song as the composer willed it, but he will seldom be in this position unless he has, by relaxing his attitude at the end of his part, given the public the "come on" sign. I believe I have furnished enough proof that I don't hold every note sacrosanct by virtue of its being printed, and am usually the first to suggest the dropping of really insignificant end bars, but such trimming is not excusable, let alone called for in the above mentioned and similar works. There the postlude is the carrier of important musical statements and often throws an entirely new light on the situation. The complete turnabout from exuberance and jubilation to calm reflection in Strauss' *Heimliche Aufforderung* is one of the outstanding stumbling stones in this respect; no greater antitheses could be imaginable to the flamboyant end of the singer's lines, than the _____ [?] bars of the postlude, and this may be the reason that this song, which otherwise contains all the ingredients of a brilliant song for the end of a group, has seldom had the required effect – that is, of course, unless the postlude was scratched *in toto*, or interpreted in contradiction to Strauss' markings of *rit.* and *dim.* This special postlude has always been a borderline case for me – aware of the fact that Strauss in all his vocal writings renders to Caesar what is his due and is also known to be very liberal regarding personal variations in practice, I have felt less

compunction in adjusting this postlude to the needs of the moment than at any other place in the standard repertory.

In reviewing all the loopholes for tampering with the composer's express ideas and prescriptions that I have so diligently and lovingly dwelt on, I realize that I have wound a rope of not inconsiderable thickness around my neck. I have been long enough a purist and zealot to whom the smallest dot on the last iota in a score was an immovable, inalterable fundament, not to sense a twinge of conscience when I break a lance for an occasional "cavalier" outlook and treatment. All I can say in defense is that I have always tried to make sure that the end was holy enough to sanctify the means.



Rhythm and Ornaments

Let us take for granted that both singer and accompanist have mastered all the mechanical intricacies that may turn up under this heading, and have a look at rhythm and metrum in general, as an expressive means.

The most obvious use as such occurs, of course, in dance or march-like forms, both in folk and artsong. The implication is clear and the effect of the song will be the stronger the more stress is given to distinctness in this regard, sometimes deliberately overriding asymmetrical or lyric tendencies in word or melody.

An interesting and usually neglected application of this general principle is found in songs where strict metrum without subdividing accentuation suggests itself as artistic goal. In somewhat philosophical terms this would mean that Time (*nota bene* with a capital T), instead of forming the natural background against which the emotional and intellectual contents of the song runs its course, now becomes a main subject of interest and interpretation. With its implication of impersonal relentlessness, of inexorable aloofness in rigidly metric progression, this approach contains powerful elements of expression. The more powerful even, since the contrast between the usual periodicized and accentuated phrasing and this *soi-disant* rhythmic monotone bring additional tension into play. In various degrees of intensity, it may spell an increased overbearing awareness of time stretching irresistibly to

the paralyzation of human emotion in the face of impending doom. One of my favorite passages that seem to postulate this approach, is the last page of Schubert's *The Wegweiser* [sic] a comparable situation is found in *Tod und das Mädchen*. The idea is the avoiding of individual accents, either for harmonic reasons or those of natural stress according to word or location in rhythmic pattern, in one word, the imaginary abolition of the measure bar as symbol of metric subdivision. In a number of more contemporary compositions we find that this has been achieved in the printed score, and while the performer may temporarily feel bereft of one of his most trusted supports, its absence suggests more strongly than any other indication that the composer did not want to establish any subdivision that would encourage rhythmical patternization. Let us therefore bear in mind that many songs of preceding vintages would fall into the same category, even though for reason of practicality and tradition the measure bars have been retained.

At the other end of the scale of accuracy stand the cases where a subtle inflection of rhythm might be indicated or permissible. I am thinking chiefly of the execution of the dotted rhythm; according to the character of the music, the dotted eighth note with attached sixteenth, for instance, it should be capable of varying from a quarter – an eighth note in triplet rhythm, to a double-dotted eighth – thirty-second. This is partly borne out by the fact that earlier musical orthography did not use the quarter and eighth in triplet notation, but substituted the dotted eighth and sixteenth for it. In Schubert's *Auf dem Flusse* we find a combination of triplets and dotted eighths,

which leaves the question open whether to treat the latter as a simplification of the triplet notation, or as a *bona fide* dotted rhythm, which of course makes the rhythmic life of the song considerably more complicated. I admit that I am more attracted by the greater possibilities in nuance and expression of a literal execution, but the historically accurate may easily argue for the former.

A similar problem which however owes its uniformly wrong treatment solely to the sloppiness of the performer, is the often encountered rhythm of two vs. three in the same beat. Singers and instrumentalists alike are guilty of following here the line of least resistance by putting the second of two equal units on the third of the accompanying triplet figure. The number of examples is legion; from the many instances in Schubert's *Ave Maria* on down. If the melody were sung alone, the difference would be mathematically and musically negligible. In combination with the accompaniment, the result is a very important loss of rhythmic richness, of inner tension and drive which are based on this contrast. The difficulty which even advanced performers experience in overcoming the tendency to coincide with the accompaniment, is pathetic to behold, and shows how ingrained such bad habits can become. I can only say that the gains derived from the proper handling of this almost microscopic problem are worth the greatest care and effort — an entirely new quality of movement and expression is produced as the necessary outcome of this crossbreed of rhythms half lilting and half floating, half stimulating and half calming, and always an incredibly delightful enrichment of the music life.

Another item worth special attention is the turn where it permits of different ways of dividing up. It is a grace so pregnant with lyrical implications that it pays well to investigate various possibilities of execution. The main difference lies between the symmetrical and asymmetrical, the rhythmical and arhythmical solutions, which in turn influence the expressive contents of the phrase.

The latest composer, chronologically speaking, who made important use of this device, is Brahms, and it is to him that I turn for the first two examples. The first occurs in the last line of either verse in his *Feldeinsamkeit* (or Schubert's *Litanei*) – and in keeping with the utterly relaxed and serene mood of the song, an execution of the ~ in four even 1/16 on the second beat almost suggests itself. The case is different in his *Sapphische Ode*, where the pent-up emotion, the subdued passion of word and music seem to call for a corresponding irregularity in singing the ~, which is best accomplished by waiting an instant with the first note of the grace till after the syncope in the left hand of the accompaniment has been sounded, bringing the last two notes of the figure on the last two eighths of the bar. An even minuter distinction can be made in the first phrase, and its repetitions, of Schumann's *Mondnacht*. Depending on whether the tempo is slow or more on the fluent side, I prefer to hear the first grace note before or after, not on the last sixteenth before the third beat. Thus an accentuating dissonance between voice and piano as well as an unimaginative, almost angular metric solution are avoided. This is hairsplitting *par excellence*, but in songs as delicate and transparent as this it might not be quite out of proportion. In the realm of instrumen-

tal music there are analogs galore to be found: if in the second theme of the first movement of the Beethoven *Kreutzer Sonata* the ~ calls for four even eighths, I feel that a like treatment in the first part of his *Fingiar Romanze* is stiff and should be replaced by one starting after the second beat. Depending on the time allotted to it a ~ will generally present some transition from a mere embellishment of a main note, towards integration on equal terms with the melodic element into which it is inserted. The latter will especially apply in lyrical songs of higher emotional pitch which would discourage notions of ornamentation for its own sake, and the singer will accordingly have to treat all notes of such an ~ as full-fledged members of his vocal line — this makes it necessary to distribute the emphasis he would ordinarily give the main note, judiciously and evenly among components of the grace, and to take special care that no initial push or accent be put on the first note. Even in moderately fluent tempo this is bound to obliterate or obscure the following notes, a phenomenon that can be observed throughout the course of the second song in Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*. The accompanist will help matters here immeasurably by relaxing the rhythm just for that fraction of a second which makes it possible for the soprano to execute the five notes distinctly and melodically.

I have gone into much detail concerning this question, not so much to propound the merits of my own solutions, notwithstanding my deep devotion to them, as to direct the artist's attention to the importance of differentiation in these regards. Not to be satisfied with what tradition or the preference of an individual edition offer, but to ex-

periment with various ways of solving the problem, is the main thing – It will add to the beauty and variety of performance and will sharpen one's keenness in perception and appreciation of infinitesimal, but nevertheless very important musical values.¹⁰

Having talked (at length) on some positive aspects of rhythm and rhythmic accent, it remains to say something on its negative or rather non-assertive properties:

Every now and then we come across passages or whole pieces in which most, if not all, rhythmic accents must be suppressed in order to avoid a constant subdivision of larger units which would run counter to their inner meaning, musically as otherwise. To do this while still retaining the proper exactitude of the metrum is not as easy as it may sound, since one of the most powerful musical instincts is that of rhythmic accentuation. In many performers it manifests itself, aside from vocal or instrumental effects, in more or less unconscious body action, extending literally from top to toe. In its gentler forms it has become an accepted or acceptable symptom of the instrumentalist's musical temperament, but the singer doesn't get off that lightly since his movements are judged an integral and responsible part of his performance, in which rhythmic stress must be confined to his vocal mechanism. To eradicate it on certain occasions even from the legitimate field, puts an additional burden on the sorely tried musical self-control of the performer,

¹⁰ Note inserted here: "Treat ~ as melodic integral & ingredient of "main line" not as grace – particularly in slow tempo!"

but the result, once achieved, is easily worth all his trouble.

Another side issue of this problem small but important is the treatment of the upbeat. I don't know the statistical figures, but at any rate the phrases that start with an upbeat are in the majority. The singer, and in a lesser measure the instrumentalist too, is often apt to neglect the upbeat, voicing it tentatively and beginning to sing or play properly only on the first stressed beat, postponing the actual start of the music into the first downbeat which happens independently of a more or less accentuated character of the music as a whole and results in a blurred or distorted initial impression which is as reprehensible as easy to avoid. Let us remember that the first beat of a bar, any bar, is already endowed with enough inherent accent of metric, harmonic, melodic and syntactic character, so that the preceding beat weds all the technical and emotional equipment to be produced and heard as a full-fledged rhythm and equally important link in the chain of development. If this goes for any upbeat, how much more this must be true for the one that starts the whole proceedings! This is patently a case for self-experimentation; a fully produced, fully present and fully connected upbeat is such a joy that once experienced, it isn't likely to be forgotten or deliberately neglected ever after.

At the other end of this line is the sustained note that closes the phrase. Here the instinctive impact of the last voiced stress means often the end of the performer's active artistic interest in the music. What follows after this is merely a petering out of sound, partly because prolonged sound is prescribed in the score, partly because this fol-

lows the line of least resistance. What this does to the end of a song and thereby to the important last impression on the audience, is easy to imagine.



