

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

DOMINICK ARGENTO'S *SONGS ABOUT SPRING* AND *MISS
MANNERS ON MUSIC*: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
COMPOSITIONAL STYLES IN POETRY VERSUS PROSE

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DOMINICK ARGENTO'S *SONGS ABOUT SPRING* AND *MISS
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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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“...Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” Isaiah 40:31

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” Isaiah 54:10

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

First, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has given me the strength to run and not grow weary, unshakeable love and peace, and brought forth blessings from even my most difficult challenges.

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Abstract

Document Title: Dominick Argento's *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*: A Comparative Analysis of Compositional Styles in Poetry Versus Prose
Author: Rebecca Ann Salter

This document is an examination of Dominick Argento's musical treatment of poetry as opposed to prose in his song cycles *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, respectively. The goal of the document is to highlight Argento's text setting and his stylistic variation in the musical depiction of words in these song cycles. Although other analytical sources examine these works, providing a broad overview, this document serves as an extensive side-by-side analysis of the musical expression of text in both works. Specifically, the study contributes to existing knowledge with a comprehensive study of Argento's compositional style in his first poetic song cycle, *Songs about Spring*, contrasted with that in his latest prose setting, *Miss Manners on Music*.

The document is organized into five chapters. Included in Chapter One are the purpose and need for the study, and an overview of related literature. Chapter Two consists of a brief biographical study on Dominick Argento, e.e.cummings, and Judith Martin. Chapters Three and Four are analyses of *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, respectively. Finally, Chapter Five compares and contrasts musical elements of both cycles side-by-side. Following the Bibliography, several appendices include original poetry and newspaper articles; a list of Argento's song

cycles written to date; and a transcript of the author's e-mail interview with Dominick Argento.

Chapter One: Introduction

After performing Dominick Argento's *Songs about Spring* on my doctoral recital, I became motivated by his compositional style to discover more about the composer and his unique musical approach. Upon learning that this song cycle was dedicated to his wife, soprano Carolyn Bailey Argento, to whom he was married for over fifty years, my curiosity was piqued even more.

Being a renowned composer of contemporary music, Argento has many celebrated song cycles. If *Songs about Spring* is not as famous as most of the other cycles, such as *Six Elizabethan Songs* or *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, perhaps it is because it was his first vocal work, written during his studies as a Bachelor of Music student at Peabody Conservatory in 1951.¹ Additionally, its relative obscurity could be attributed to it not being published until 1980, almost twenty-five years after it was premiered. Another possibility is that this cycle is stylistically different from most of Argento's other vocal writings, including his song cycle, *Miss Manners on Music*, composed in 1998.

Whatever the reason for *Songs about Spring* receiving a lesser amount of public attention, it is worthy of a closer look, especially because it helps fulfill the need for high-soprano, contemporary American art song literature with textual depth.

¹ Dominick Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer's Life*, Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 1. The first three songs were written in 1950 and premiered in 1951. The last two songs were added in 1955, with orchestrations added in 1960.

Purpose

Argento is famous for his contemporary vocal compositions, especially operas and song cycles. As I started researching his song cycles, *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, stylistic differences began to emerge. Argento has often spoken about the importance of the text in his compositions.² In spite of this personal belief, the poetry for his earliest song cycle, *Songs about Spring*, was chosen hastily, in order to meet an academic deadline. In contrast, the text for one of his most recently written song cycles, *Miss Manners on Music*, was painstakingly selected after searching through over one thousand pages of newspaper articles.³ Whether the compositional differences these song cycles exhibit is due to the discrepancy in text selection process, Argento's maturing compositional style, the use of poetry as opposed to prose, or a combination of all three, the works are stylistically different.

For example, even though they were eventually orchestrated, the piano accompaniments in Argento's first song cycle, *Songs about Spring*, while intricate, are typical of art song accompaniment writing. The accompaniments support the voice in a traditional art song fashion, often doubling and/or echoing the vocal line, and sharing thematic material. On the other hand, the piano accompaniments in *Miss Manners on Music* are more orchestral in nature. They are independent from the vocal line, and tend to have a thinner texture than the accompaniments in *Songs about Spring*. As opposed to *Songs about Spring*, these piano lines often resemble a single

² Argento, "The Matter of Text." THE NATS JOURNAL 44, no. 4 (March/April 1988), 6-10.

³ Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer's Life*, 181.

instrumental line. In addition, the vocal lines of *Miss Manners on Music* are declamatory—much more independent than those in *Songs about Spring*—representative of Argento's more mature prose settings, in which the influence of his operatic writing is evident.

While e.e.cummings' poetry in *Songs about Spring* is contemporary and lacks traditional metric verses, the thoughts themselves are incomplete, are not presented in complete sentences, and are sometimes repeated. In contrast, Judith Martin's question and answer dialogue in *Miss Manners on Music* is stated in complete thoughts and sentences, and always progresses sequentially to the next thought. Logically, the diversity in textual style demands variety in compositional style—the prose understandably lends itself to a through-composed form and declamatory vocal line; as opposed to the poetry, which is set in repetitive or semi-repetitive sections, in a much more traditional art song form, with repeated thematic material and vocal melodies. These, and additional dissimilarities will be explored in this paper.

Following a brief biographical study, this paper will systematically compare and contrast *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, examining text setting as it relates to establishing general moods or emotions, as opposed to creating specific characters or roles. Elements such as form (of individual songs and of each song cycle as a whole), phrasing, melody, harmony, rhythm, vocal articulation, accompaniment, choice of text, and any additional factors contributing to the illustration of text will be studied. Because the text selection is an integral part of Argento's process, in the course of evaluating both his earliest and one of his latest

song cycles this paper will demonstrate how the music supports the text in both works, yet results in differing compositional styles when Argento uses poetry rather than prose.

Need for the Study

As previously stated, Dominick Argento has often emphasized the importance of the text in relation to the music in his vocal works. This study will investigate that connection in *Songs About Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, and its impact on the musical shape of each work. In apparent opposition to his strong feelings about the importance of the words in vocal music, Argento's method of selecting the poetry for his first vocal composition was less than discriminating. The first three pieces of *Songs about Spring* were written at the beginning of his compositional studies, during his undergraduate years, at a time when instrumental compositions dominated his output. In his keynote address at the 38th National Convention of The National Association of Teachers of Singing, Argento explained the process in which he found the e.e.cummings poems:

After two years of composition lessons, churning out sonatas, quartets, symphonic pieces, my composition teacher, noticing the omission on my part, felt I ought to try writing some songs, a form I had been deliberately avoiding because I found it far less glamorous and exciting than orchestral or chamber music. I obediently went to the library, checked out an armful of books of poetry, and within half-an-hour I selected a group of poems by e.e.cummings which seemed the right length. I finally picked three (later I added two more) all dealing with spring and made a little cycle out of them for soprano and piano. The poems themselves are very pretty, but I did not choose them because spring had any more significance for me than any other season, or because the texts were particularly inspiring. I selected them

quite coolly and dispassionately because I had to have some songs ready for my next lesson.⁴

Argento elaborated that his method of choosing texts became increasingly deliberate after his first two song cycles, *Songs about Spring* and *Six Elizabethan Songs*, were composed. He added, "In most cases my search for the right text...began to take much longer than the composition of the songs themselves."⁵

Argento's song cycle, *Miss Manners on Music*, is a commissioned work. Robert Martin, the husband of newspaper advice columnist Miss Manners (Judith Martin), originally made the request in 1995. He wanted to surprise his wife at her sixtieth birthday party in 1998 with a cycle of songs excerpted from her advice columns. Argento hesitated to take the commission, having reservations about finding anything suitable for a song cycle.⁶

Martin was persistent, however, and soon Argento was poring through four large anthologies of Miss Manners' columns. Eventually, he stumbled onto a column about the way audiences behave at ballets. Argento writes:

Gradually an idea began to coalesce, and I searched the more than one thousand pages thoroughly until I found what I hoped might be there: advice on how to behave at the opera, at the symphony, at a concert of contemporary music, at a church recital, and so on. After I assembled and studied a possible text consisting of seven excerpts, my interest began to waken to the task, and by the time I started composing the music I was enthusiastic about the project. As is always the case, once the text was right, composition went rapidly.⁷

⁴ Dominick Argento, "The Matter of Text," 7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir*, 181.

⁷ Ibid.

In contrast to the seemingly serendipitous selection of poetry for *Songs about Spring* by a student simply wanting to complete an assignment, the process of researching and assembling the columns for *Miss Manners on Music* accurately depicts Argento's mature procedure of solidifying text for a project.

Comparing *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music* will provide insights into the development of Argento's compositional style, especially as it pertains to the type of text used. In "Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature,"⁸ Carol Kimball presents a method of organized stylistic study of art song. Elements of stylistic analysis include melody, harmony, rhythm, vocal articulation, accompaniment, and choice of text. Using Kimball's method as a basis, and paying particular attention to Argento's treatment of the diverse types of texts, this document will thoroughly examine the similarities and differences in his first song cycle, *Songs about Spring*, and one of his latest song cycles, *Miss Manners on Music*.

Design and Procedure

Following the Introduction (Chapter One), this document consists of four additional chapters: Biography, Analysis of *Songs about Spring*, Analysis of *Miss Manners on Music*, and Comparison. Each of the four chapters is summarized below.

⁸ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, Hal Leonard, Milwaukee, WI, 2006.

Biography

Chapter Two briefly focuses on historical and biographical information about the composer and the librettists of *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*. Argento's compositional style and musical influences are studied. Additionally, Argento was interviewed via e-mail.

Analysis

Chapter Three consists of a broad theoretical analysis of each song in the *Songs about Spring*, a discussion of the impact of the poems on the compositional style, and an assessment of how the music serves the text. This examination focuses on the notion of creating an emotion in the poetic text settings, as opposed to creating characters and specific atmospheres in the prose text settings. Chapter Four consists of a similar analysis and discussion on *Miss Manners on Music*. Based on Carol Kimball's analytical method, both chapters examine musical elements including form, phrasing, melody, harmony, rhythm, vocal articulation, accompaniment, choice of text, and any supplementary factors contributing to the musical depiction of text in each song cycle.

Comparison

Chapter Five analytically compares the compositional styles of *Songs about Spring* with *Miss Manners on Music*. Several well-defined diversities emerge when considering the interrelationship of the text and music through elements such as form,

melody, harmony, rhythm, vocal articulation, accompaniment, and choice of text. First, Argento's poetic settings in *Songs about Spring* have versicular sections (and in the case of "when faces called flowers float out of the ground," actual verses), as opposed to his through-composed prose settings in *Miss Manners on Music*. Second, regular phrasing and repetition of melodic thematic material occurs in *Songs about Spring*. In contrast, the phrases in *Miss Manners on Music* are consistently irregular, with little to no repetition of melodic content, contributing to the conversational style of text setting. Next, the vocal lines in *Songs about Spring* are non-conversational, often rhythmically set with syllables of equal duration, and sometimes sustaining a syllable through several notes. On the contrary, the vocal lines in *Miss Manners on Music* are syllabic, with a natural, speech-like quality. Furthermore, the interaction between the voice and piano in *Songs about Spring* resembles traditional art song. However, the voice and piano are independent in *Miss Manners on Music*. Finally, the poetic settings in *Songs about Spring* create feelings and sensations, whereas the prose settings in *Miss Manners on Music* focus more on character creation.

Limitations

This study is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis but primarily focuses on the interrelationship of the text and music. This study does not analyze segments of the text alone or separate the music for an exclusively theoretical examination. Art song is the blending of poetry and music, and the listener hears the impact of words within the musical setting. For this reason, and because the composer considers the

text to be a vital part of the music as a whole, a broad analysis, including elements of both text and music, is discussed. More specifically, this analysis focuses on text setting and the concept of creating feelings and moods in the poetry, as opposed to creating characters and conjuring up specific settings in the prose. This is not an all-encompassing study of Argento's entire vocal output. The study focuses primarily on *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*.

Related Literature

Several texts have been of particular interest to this study. Dominick Argento's *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer's Life* is a valuable source of first-hand information. Because this book discusses all of his works written at the time of publication, in chronological order, it provides not only an index of all of Argento's compositions but also a candid account of his life. Details of his personal and professional lives are peppered with recollections about his education and compositional practices. Both *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music* are discussed in detail; however, the book is not meant to provide an analysis or comparison of either (or any) of Argento's works. It is merely a fascinating reflection of the composer's life and work from his perspective.

Carol Kimball's *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* provides a systematic method of stylistic analysis, and is the basis for several of the analytical elements of this study.⁹ Kimball begins with a process of evaluation for art song,

⁹ Ibid., 23.

followed by chapters on specific art song literature. Several pages are devoted to Dominick Argento, focusing on two song cycles: *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* and *Six Elizabethan Songs*.

Many interviews, reviews, and journal articles have been useful sources of information. “The Matter of Text” by Dominick Argento provides first-hand insight into the composer’s compositional process in an address he gave at the 1987 San Antonio NATS Convention. Argento gave another lecture in 1977, entitled “The Composer and the Singer,” which appeared in the NATS Bulletin that year. This, too, is a beneficial source of first-hand information. Both articles deal with the subject of text in relation to the music and the singer, and thus enlighten readers on Argento’s methods of choosing texts.

Beth Ray Westlund’s article from the January/February 2008 NATS Journal, “Letters for a Composer: Dominick Argento’s *Casa Guidi*,” concentrates on one of Argento’s latest song cycles, *Casa Guidi*. Westlund analyzes the text and music in the cycle of poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. While also providing some additional biographical information, this article is especially useful because it provides a comparative example of an analysis of another Argento prose setting. The analysis of the song cycle is also a useful reference when comparing Argento’s poetry and prose settings.

“Composer Survey: Opinions on Solo Vocal Literature,” an article from *Perspectives of New Music*, by Virginia Palmer, gives actual responses (from Argento and other twentieth-century art song composers) to survey questions about art song in

the twentieth-century and about the relationship of text and music. Included are thoughts on art song in general, text in relation to music, and the singer's role in interpreting song.

"The Argento Papers," by James Helme Sutcliffe, is a valuable article from *Opera News*. This article covers the world premiere of *The Aspern Papers* at the Dallas Opera and is noteworthy because the author was working on his M.A. at Eastman School of Music while Argento was also there working on his Ph.D. Sutcliffe provides perspectives as an "insider" to Argento's social circle and quotes from informative letters he received from the Argentos that partially explain the composer's compositional process.

"*Songs about spring: an examination of the relationship of the music of Dominick Argento and the poetry of E.E. Cummings*," is a master's thesis by Beth Cram Porter. This analytical paper is a good initial look at Argento's first song cycle. However, while the relationship of poetry to music is discussed, no comparisons are drawn to Argento's prose settings.

Kihoon Yang's dissertation, "Preparation and performance of song cycles and an opera by Dominick Argento: a guide for the pianist," has been useful in several ways. Yang wrote this paper in conjunction with his performance as accompanist on several Argento vocal works, including Argento's opera, *Postcard From Morocco*. The author's viewpoints, as the pianist for those performances, are beneficial to this study.

An additional dissertation, “The Concert Vocal Works of Dominick Argento: A Performance Analysis,” which contains a lengthy transcript from an original interview with Argento, is especially useful. Although *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music* are not discussed in depth or at all, respectively, the analyses of other Argento song cycles supplies useful comparisons.

“Miss Manners on Music: A New Prose Song Cycle for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano by Dominick Argento,” by Karla J. Qualls, is an analytical document covering *Miss Manners on Music*. In addition to an original interview recorded in the Appendix, the Bibliography has been a helpful resource. The document itself is a useful tool with the analysis of the song cycle and, with a chapter dedicated to prose texts in Argento song cycles, also provides an overview of his prose settings. While Qualls’ document covers *Miss Manners on Music* in detail, this author’s study focuses on a comparison of *Songs about Spring* to *Miss Manners on Music*, and Argento’s style variations when setting prose versus poetry.

Other dissertations and papers have been valuable to this study. Three documents, while not pertaining directly to *Songs about Spring* or *Miss Manners on Music*, delve further into Argento’s compositional style: Eric Weston Garton’s “Dominick Argento’s *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*: Elements of Tonality in Twelve Tone Composition;” Martha Rowe’s “A Poet Revealed: Elizabeth Barrett Browning as Portrayed in Libby Larsen’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and Dominick Argento’s *Casa Guidi*,” and William David Stevens’ “Dominick Argento’s *Six Elizabethan Songs*.” Finally, Nedra Patrice Cobb’s “Rhyme and Reason: A Critical

View of Poetry and Prose Used in the Twentieth-Century American Art Song,” provides beneficial perspectives on the musical text setting of poetry and prose in American art song, including Argento’s *Casa Guidi*.

Supplemental information has been collected from this author’s interviews and e-mail communications with Dominick Argento.

Though many papers and articles have covered the vocal works of Dominick Argento, this study goes well beyond the research that already exists on what the composer considers to be his Opus 1, *Songs about Spring*. In addition, this study will specifically compare the composer’s compositional technique utilizing poetry as opposed to prose. By evaluating his first song cycle along with one of his most recent cycles, *Miss Manners on Music*, this study compares and contrasts elements of form, phrasing, melody, harmony, rhythm, vocal articulation, accompaniment, and choice of text, providing a glimpse into Argento’s compositional style as demonstrated in his text setting of both early and mature vocal works.

Chapter Two: Biography

As one of the most eminent American composers of Twentieth-Century vocal music, Dominick Argento has received numerous accolades, including a Pulitzer Prize for his song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Wolf*. Although born in York, Pennsylvania, on October 27, 1927, to Sicilian immigrants, he has spent the bulk of his compositional career in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

No one in his family demonstrated musical abilities, and he once described his elementary music classes as “fifty minute sessions of excruciating boredom.”¹⁰ Argento’s music education truly began when he discovered some books about music at a local library. There he read about Gershwin and Stravinsky, and began checking out and listening to their recordings.¹¹ Formal piano lessons were not begun until Argento was sixteen years old even though he had started composing around age fourteen.¹²

After high school graduation, Argento was drafted into the Army during World War II. He served in Africa, and attributes his placement as a cryptographer to

¹⁰ “Dominick Argento,” *American Choral Directors Association Online*, <http://acda.org/conferences/2009/argento> (accessed October 21, 2009).

¹¹ “Dominick Argento believes piece for National Cathedral his best.” York Town Square, February 26, 2008, 3: http://www.yorkblog.com/yorktownsquare/2008/02/dominick_argento_believes_piec.php (accessed June 28, 2008).

¹² Ibid.

his musical skills. When the war ended, he entered Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland, as a piano performance major.¹³

At Peabody, Argento studied composition with Nicholas Nabokov, whom he portrays as an inadequate teacher, at best.¹⁴ In addition to training with Nabokov while he was in Baltimore, he also studied composition in the summers with composer Hugo Weisgall. It was during his studies with Weisgall that the first three songs in *Songs About Spring* were composed (the last two songs of the cycle were not written until 1955). These three songs were premiered on his senior recital by a local soprano, Carolyn Bailey, in 1950. Argento describes how he became acquainted with Carolyn:

I needed a soprano to perform *Songs About Spring*. I consulted Peter DeLone, a student composer like myself and my best friend, who was surprised that I didn't know about the terrific soprano from my own hometown of York, Pennsylvania. Her name was Carolyn Bailey, and at the age of fifteen she had been given a personal scholarship by one of Peabody's principal voice teachers and became a conservatory matriculate in 1948. Despite the fact that we must have shared the same Greyhound or train many weekends during the fifty-mile trip back and forth between Baltimore and York, we had never met. A blind date was soon arranged, and over dessert I revealed my ulterior motive. Yes, of course, she'd be happy to sing the cycle. So at the recital, Carolyn gave the premiere performance of these songs and I was the accompanist, a role I played for a number of her recitals later on. What I did not know at the time was that for many years to come she would sing the premiere of everything I composed for soprano and serve as an invaluable adviser on matters vocal; best of all, I would remain her accompanist in another sense: three years later she became my wife.¹⁵

¹³ Oxford Music Online, "Argento, Dominick," 1.

¹⁴ Argento, 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

One positive outcome of his connection with Nabakov was his Fulbright scholarship to study in Florence, Italy, after graduation in 1951—an experience that Argento describes as “life-altering.”¹⁶ In Florence, he studied with Luigi Dallapiccola, who reintroduced Argento to twelve-tone compositional technique, something that he had originally snubbed. He returned to Peabody Conservatory, this time studying under Henry Cowell, to obtain his Master of Music in 1954; and then earned his Doctorate from the Eastman School of Music in 1957, where he studied with Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson, as well as Alan Hovhaness during the summer.

Argento describes his years at Eastman and the following year spent in Florence on a Guggenheim Fellowship as, “the happiest and most fulfilling years of my life.”¹⁷ Italy became a special place for Dominick and Carolyn Argento—a place where they vacationed annually for the next forty years.¹⁸ Upon moving back to the United States, the Argentos lived on his father’s farm until he was called to teach music theory at the University of Minnesota, where he would stay for the remainder of his career, later teaching composition and opera history.

In the beginning, the Argentos were unhappy in Minnesota but soon changed their minds.¹⁹ Argento writes:

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸ Ibid. (Argento’s Fulbright and Two Guggenheims were spent in Florence.)

¹⁹ Mary Ann Feldman, “Dominick Argento: Minnesota Romantic,” October 2002, http://music.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/0210_argento/ (accessed June 28, 2008).

I wanted to return to York and have nothing more to do with the Midwest. Much later I used to joke that we didn't really unpack our bags that first couple of years in Minnesota, hoping and praying that a position would materialize on the East or West Coast, certain that remaining in Minneapolis would be artistic suicide for a promising young composer. Gradually that fear evaporated. I made the decision that Minnesota would be home for the rest of my life: should positions from other schools ever be offered I would turn them down. (They were, and I did.)²⁰

He adds, "In time it became clear that the community was very supportive of the arts...By my fourth year at the university I made the decision that Minneapolis would be home for the rest of my life."²¹ In fact, Argento credits his artistic freedom to his choice of residence. Living away from the cultural trends in big cities allowed him to develop his own style, apart from outside influence.²² In a quotation from Minnesota Public Radio, Argento further explains,

Early on it started to dawn on me that living here I was able to do exactly what I lived for...Here I've only had to be concerned with the performers and audiences I'm dealing with; living in a place like New York or San Francisco, a composer is always reading the market value of the arts—the ticker tape is coming into his workroom all the time. That is a distant phenomenon for me.²³

In a short time, Argento and his wife became tightly woven into the musical community of Minnesota. Audiences in Minneapolis and St. Paul embraced Argento—in the New York Times, when describing his popularity in Minnesota,

²⁰ Argento, 27.

²¹ Ibid., 27-8.

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Feldman.

Heidi Waleson called him “a household name, and the elder statesman of music.”²⁴ He has premiered over sixty works in Minnesota, including a piece that the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra played on their inaugural concert. Argento was also a co-founder of Center Opera—which later became the Minnesota Opera Company—a company that has premiered many of his operas. In addition, he has composed for countless other Minnesota organizations, including the Guthrie Theater. He joked, “I think I’ve written for every organization in this town except the P.T.A.”²⁵

Argento was familiar with the writings of poet e.e.cummings when he chose the poems about spring for his assignment that formed the first three songs in *Songs about Spring*. Argento had enjoyed hearing e.e.cummings read some of his own poetry when he was a student at Peabody Conservatory.²⁶ e.e.cummings, or Edward Estlin Cummings, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1894, to parents Rebecca and Edward Cummings.²⁷ His father was a Harvard professor, as well as a Unitarian Minister, and was very influential in his youth. Richard S. Kennedy describes the impact Edward Cummings had on his son, the poet:

Most prominent is the constant verbalization which was part of a minister’s life. Then too, some of Edward Cummings’ own habits of language were good for the ears and mind of someone who was going to speak as a poet. He loved wordplay. His sermons had puns, had

²⁴ Heidi Waleson, “Composer With a Built-In Audience,” October 27, 1985. Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Dominick Argento, Author’s E-mail Interview, June 2, 2009, Appendix D, 168.

²⁷ Richard S. Kennedy, *Dreams in the Mirror*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, 1980, 8-9.

toyings with proverbs and mottos and slogans, linguistic ways to attract or surprise the minds of his parishioners.²⁸

Equally influential to e.e.cummings was his mother, who provided him and his sister with a loving and happy environment in which to grow up. His pleasant childhood is recalled in his poem “in Just-spring,” one of the poems set to music by Dominick Argento in *Songs about Spring*. According to Kennedy:

Just beyond the place where Irving and Scott Streets formed a point, a third, Farrar Street, joined them from the east and at the center stood a ‘tree square,’ as the children called it, a small island of greenery with a tree that served as ‘goal’ for hide-and-seek and other games. Spring thaws filled a low spot in the street there with a huge puddle, a ‘mud-luscious’ site. In years to come, the memory of this annual occurrence plus the advent of the balloon-seller, blowing his whistle, and the remembered joy of childhood play would coalesce to inspire e.e.cummings’ best known poem...²⁹

Argento was also familiar with Judith Martin’s writings when he was commissioned to write *Miss Manners on Music*, due to the popularity of her nationally syndicated “Miss Manners” advice columns in the Washington Post. In fact, he had met Martin and her husband, Robert, at a performance of his opera, *Postcard from Morocco*.³⁰ Martin was born in Washington D.C. in 1938, where she still resides and works today as the foremost expert on etiquette.³¹ Virginia Shea interviewed Martin in 1995, when she said:

You can deny all you want that there is etiquette, and a lot of people do in everyday life. But if you behave in a way that offends the people

²⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁹ Ibid., 24-5.

³⁰ Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir*, 180.

³¹ Online Article, <http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/judith-martin/>, 1.

you're trying to deal with, they will stop dealing with you... There are plenty of people who say, 'We don't care about etiquette, but we can't stand the way so-and-so behaves, and we don't want him around!' Etiquette doesn't have the great *sanctions* that the *law* has. But the main *sanction* we do have is in not dealing with these people and isolating them because their *behavior* is unbearable.³²

Martin also has experience as a journalist and a theater and film critic.³³

At first, Argento found the idea of writing a cycle of songs on Martin's advice columns "harebrained."³⁴ Nonetheless, Robert Martin was persistent, and Argento eventually found the seven witty columns about music that came to form *Miss Manners on Music*.

At age 81, Argento continues to write primarily for the voice. In a recent article in the *Choral Journal*, Philip Brunelle quotes a talk given at St. Olaf College in 1988:

I regard the voice as the quintessential musical instrument with its flexibility, its infinite variety of colors and moods, its unique ability to combine word and tone, but best of all, the fact that it constantly reminds us of humanity, of fellow-beings who have joys and sorrows like our own. I am tempted to say that the voice is the only instrument which has a soul.³⁵

Argento's recent choral piece, *Cenotaph*, premiered at the National American Choral Directors Association convention in Oklahoma City in March, 2009. Lately, he has written two additional song cycles: *Three Sonnets*

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Argento, 180.

³⁵ Philip Brunelle, "Music for Angels and Mortals," *Choral Journal*, December 2008, Vol. 49, no. 6, 14.

of Petrarch, for baritone, and *Three Meditations*, for unaccompanied soprano. Argento's wife of over fifty years, Carolyn, died in 2006 from a neurological disorder,³⁶ and the National Cathedral premiered his memorial composition "Evensong: Of Love and Angels" in March, 2008.³⁷ Argento still spends a substantial portion of each year residing in Italy.

³⁶ Ben Mattison, "Carolyn Baily Argento Dies at 75," Playbill Arts Online Article, <http://www.playbillarts.com/news/article/3876.html> (accessed July 14, 2008).

³⁷ Alison Young, "Dominick Argento's Memorial: 'Evensong: Of Love and Angels'," Minnesota Public Radio Online Article, http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/05/25/argento_memorial/ (accessed October 21, 2009).

Chapter Three: *Songs about Spring*

Dominick Argento set the text in *Songs about Spring* in such a way as to reflect the sentiment of each e.e.cummings poem in the song cycle. Some songs are obviously set with traditional verses, while others are set in sections that resemble traditional verses. All sections or verses are established by like poetic ideas and shared thematic musical material. Except for “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” these contemporary poems do not contain traditional metric verses. However, they still resemble conventional poetry through their presentation of ideas in fragmented phrases with internal rhymes and lack of regular punctuation, allowing for versicular sections and phrasing, repetition of text, and development of thematic material in the voice.

Each song in the cycle has an inter-dependent vocal and piano part, resembling traditional art song. In addition, Argento uses the association of words and music to establish a unique feeling or emotion, pertaining to the joys of spring, in each song. This analysis examines the interrelationship of music and text in each song as well as the entire cycle, and addresses the musical factors that contribute to the portrayal of the text.

who knows if the moon's a balloon?

“who knows if the moon's a balloon?” consists of three sections and a codetta, musically set to create the sensation of soaring in a balloon. Comparable to verses in traditional poetry settings, each of these sections presents a new idea in the poem: section one focuses on the feeling of floating in the sky, section two focuses on the feeling of floating higher, section three focuses on the feeling of sailing away, and the codetta focuses on the feeling of springtime love. All sections, including the codetta, share recurring thematic material. While phrases in each section are irregular, metric regularity is preserved in the triplet patterns of 6/8 and 9/8 time signatures, and poetic ideas are contained within and do not extend beyond their sectional boundaries.

Sharing of thematic material integrates the piano and voice, much like a conventional art song. First appearing in the piano, in measures 1 through 3, is a lively theme consisting of light, fast-moving, descending arpeggios based on major and minor thirds, followed by an ascending passage, presented in alternation between the piano and voice. Each time this thematic idea recurs, a repetitive rhythmic pattern of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note establishes the first descending arpeggio. The ascending passage ends with a scale, leading the vocalist to the beginning pitch in measure 4. (Example 3.1)

Allegretto piacevole (♩. = 76 ca.)

mf who knows —

mf poco dim. mp

sempre simile

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Ex. 3.1: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” mm. 1-4

The vocal line in each of the three sections demonstrates similar characteristics, such as an opening ascending scale and melismatic passages on the words “sky,” “high,” and “sail.” These vocal melismas, which drift up, then down, and then up again, help create the sensation of floating. (Example 3.2a, 3.2b, and 3.2c)

poco crescendo *f*

sky — filled with

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Ex. 3.2a: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” vocal line, mm. 9-11

poco a poco cresc. *f*

high — high - er — with

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Ex. 3.2b: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” vocal line, mm. 25-27



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Ex. 3.2c: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” vocal line, mm. 38-40

Text painting occurs throughout the song, with the vocal and treble piano lines representing the balloon in the sky, and the piano bass line representing the earth. In the following example, measures 1 through 7, upward motion at the end of the motif in the voice and piano supports the text as the steadily descending scales in the bass line of the piano depict the earth receding beneath the balloon. Moving melodically in opposite directions, the vocal and treble piano lines (balloon) act independently of the piano bass line (earth) in rhythm and registration. (Example 3.3)

Allegretto piacevole (♩. = 76 ca.)

who knows...

if the moon's a bal - loon, com - ing out of a

sempre simile

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Ex. 3.3: “who knows if the moons a balloon?,” mm. 1-7

In addition, the freedom of the balloon is illustrated in large leaps, such as the B-flat to F-natural in measure 9 on the word, “sky” (Example 3.4a), and the B-natural to F-sharp in measure 38 on the word, “sail” (Example 3.4b).



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Ex. 3.4a: “who knows if the moons a balloon?,” vocal line, m. 9, beats 4-6



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Ex. 3.4b: “who knows if the moons a balloon?,” vocal line, m. 38, beats 4-6

Every time thematic material is heard in the voice, fragments of the repetitive pattern of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note are doubled or reiterated in the piano, linking the vocal line to the accompaniment. For example, this type of interaction between the voice and piano occurs under the melismatic “sky” in measures 9 through 11. (Example 3.5)

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Ex. 3.5: “who knows if the moons a balloon?,” mm. 9-11, beats 1-3

In addition, each repetition of the melismatic theme in the vocal line helps to define a new section.

Measures 24 through 27 of the second section contains inverted thematic material in the piano, combined with a crescendo, an increase in the use of staccato sixteenth notes, and a higher registration in the voice. The diminution of note values results in a perception of accelerated tempo, which depicts the balloon gaining momentum on its upward journey, a journey in which the balloon often aggressively rises and soars, and other times leisurely floats and descends. (Example 3.6a and 3.6b)



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Ex 3.6a: Thematic material, “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” vocal line, mm. 25-26



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Ex 3.6b: Inverted thematic material, “who knows if the moon’s a balloon,” piano right hand, mm. 24-25

Thematic development continues in section three, with escalating accents occurring in the piano and voice through measure 44. (Example 3.7)

41 *mp poco a poco cresc.* *f*

keen cit - y which no-bod-y's ev - er vis-it-ed,

poco a poco cresc. *f* *ff*

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Ex 3.7: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?,” mm. 41-45

Several musical elements reflect the changing text in a new section beginning at the codetta in measure 46, establishing a more subdued version of the general mood. First, a meter change to 9/8 and a fermata on the word “where” in measure 46 provide a rhythmic slowing, followed by a slower tempo, a pronounced lessening of rhythmic activity in the left hand, a softer dynamic level, and thinner texture in measures 47 through 50. (Example 3.8)

44 *f* *molto rall.* *p* *Meno Mosso con delicatezza*

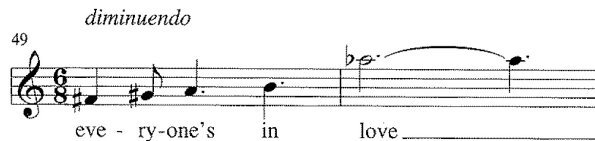
vis-it-ed, where al - ways it's Spring) and

f *ff* *molto rall.* *pp con delicatezza*

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Ex. 3.8: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?,” mm. 44-48

In this section, the vocal line loses all hints of melismatic activity as the piano continues with thematic fragments—the balloon has stabilized, and continues to soar with leaps, such as the diminished seventh leap from B-natural to A-flat on “in love.” (Example 3.9)



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Ex 3.9: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?,” vocal line, mm. 49-50

Legato vocal phrases are soft and sustained as the piano completely shifts to the treble register, giving the impression that having flown higher and sailed to the sky in previous sections, the balloon is momentarily peacefully floating above the distant earth.

This serene moment abruptly passes as the text, “and flowers pick themselves,” is accompanied by a return of the recurring descending bass line under the continuing theme in the treble line, accelerating to the original, exuberant tempo. Another large vocal leap between “pick” and “them” portrays the balloon gaining height and momentum one last time. The closing B-flat major triad sounds surprisingly out of place following a series of irregular ascending scales in the right hand of the piano (Example 3.10), ending the piece appropriately with a musical question mark.

54 *poco a poco accel.* **Tempo I**
 pick them selves
poco a poco accel. *p*
sim.

58 **Lento**
cresc. *molto stringendo* *f* *sfz* *lunga* *ppp*

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Ex. 3.10 “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?,” mm. 54-62

Working together, the vocal line and accompaniment in “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?” create an emotion or mood—in this song, a feeling of floating or soaring with complete freedom. In fact, the accompaniment resembles traditional art song in the way it supports the text, at times even doubling the vocal melody.

Thematic material is woven throughout the vocal line and accompaniment, connecting each part in such a way that they are completely dependent on each other in illustrating the mood of the words. Uniformity in the text, accompaniment, and vocal line not only helps generate a single feeling and inner sensory response to the poetry, but also closely resembles traditional art song. Additional reminders of conventional art song appear in the establishment of versicular sections, which are

delineated based on the poetry and supported by repetition of thematic material.

Although the verses each have a separate idea to convey (flying, higher, sailing, etc.), the music serves to create a single feeling of floating, effectively linking each versical idea to the illustration of the soaring balloon.

Spring is like a perhaps hand

Following the pattern established in the first song, Argento sets the text in “Spring is like a perhaps hand” to produce a sensation of passing time and distractions. Text painting, a prominent musical feature in the song, helps establish that feeling. Although the versicular second song in *Songs about Spring* does not have regular phrases, the phrases share recurring melodic and textual material. In addition, the piano and voice interact with one another, sharing thematic material and, at times, doubling the melodic line.

One formal element of Argento’s treatment of e.e.cummings’s poetry in this song cycle is the presence of versicular sections, and “Spring is like a perhaps hand” is no exception. Distinctly divided into two verses, each verse presents the theme in almost identical vocal phrases. Entering in measure 3, the voice opens the first verse with the text “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” while the bass line in the piano immediately echoes a thematic fragment in measure 4. (Example 3.11)

The musical score for 'Spring is like a perhaps hand' features a voice part and a piano accompaniment. The voice part begins with the lyrics 'Spring is like a perhaps hand' under a melodic line. The piano part features a bass line that echoes a thematic fragment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* *molto espr.* and *simile*.

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Ex. 3.11: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 3-5

The thematic fragment is repeated in measure 8, but now in the treble register of the piano and at a new pitch level, beginning on the word “Nowhere” and continuing into

the one measure interlude, which leads the singer to the next entrance pitch of E-natural. (Example 3.12)



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Ex. 3.12: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 8-10

After a piano interlude in measures 27 and 28 which returns the singer to the original entrance pitch, thematic material is presented once more at the beginning of the second verse. Although the theme and repetitive rhythmic pattern appear in the vocal and bass lines, the texture is thicker, with the addition of a repeated A. The first phrase of the second verse is almost an exact repeat of the opening phrase of the first verse, with just a slight rhythmic alteration (a quarter-note instead of a dotted quarter-note) on the first word, which imitates previous appearances of the theme in the piano. (Example 3.13)

27 *mp* spring is like a per- haps Hand

p *sim.*

poco *mp*

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Ex. 3.13: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 27-31

Much like traditional art song, the piano supports the voice in a conventional fashion, providing entrance pitches and, at times, even doubling the vocal line. As an example of providing the entrance pitch for the singer, in measure 10, the top note in the piano corresponds with the entrance pitch in the voice (E-natural). Then, in measure 11, the piano doubles the eighth-note and quarter-note A in the voice. (See Ex. 3.14)

mp ar-rang-ing a win-dow, —

p

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Ex. 3.14: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 10-11

Additionally, in measures 39 through 42, the singer is provided with the entrance pitch of A-flat before the word “carefully.” The piano also doubles the voice with a G

on the syllable “-haps” of “perhaps,” a B-flat on the syllable “flow-” of “flower,” and a D on the word “here.” (Ex. 3.15)

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Ex. 3.15: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 39-42

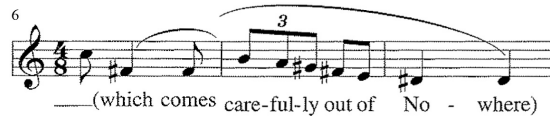
Text painting, however, is the defining element of this song. Immediately apparent in the second song in Argento’s *Songs about Spring* is the repetition of an eighth-note/quarter-note/eighth-note rhythm in an unhurried 4/8 meter. Beginning in the first measure on an F (the opening pitch for the singer, displaced one octave lower), this stable underlying rhythm permeates the song, with few interruptions. (Example 3.16)

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Ex. 3.16: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 1-3

This recurring rhythmic pattern, like a ticking clock, creates an awareness of constantly passing time.

The vocal line represents the word “perhaps” with a melodic line filled with unexpected twists and turns. For example, although the melody begins with a pitch center of F and no chromatic alterations, F-sharps, a G-sharp, and D-sharps appear on the text “which comes carefully out of Nowhere” in measures 6 through 8. (Example 3.17)



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Ex. 3.17: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” vocal line, mm. 6-8

Two measures of 5/8 (measures 12 and 14) temporarily disrupt the rhythmic pattern as the text refers to people who look and stare. This interruption of the established repetitive rhythm helps generate a feeling of suspended time, supporting the overall impression of passing time and interruptions thereof. (Example 3.18)

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Ex. 3.18: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 11-15

Fluctuations in the regular rhythmic pattern seem to represent distractions from the natural ebb and flow of everyday life. When the accompaniment returns to the recurring rhythmic pattern and the texture thins to a single note (B-natural, an octave lower than the singer's B-natural) in measure 15, it perhaps illustrates a slow return to routine that typically follows an unanticipated life distraction. As the vertical intervals expand in the piano interlude (measures 16 through 18), re-establishing the stable rhythmic pattern and the theme, a sense of return to normalcy is created. Appearing at yet another pitch level, the thematic fragments appear in the treble register in measures 16 through 18, as well as in the bass register in measure 19. (Example 3.19)

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Ex. 3.19: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” piano, mm. 15-20

Additional text painting occurs in the vocal line with unusual leaps and chromatic alterations on the text “placing carefully there a strange thing and a known thing here.” (Example 3.20)

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Ex. 3.20: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” vocal line, mm. 20-24

Sustained chords under the text, “and changing everything carefully,” illustrate the change as well as temporarily suspend the rhythmic pattern in measures 25 through 26. (Example 3.21)

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Ex. 3.21: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 25-26

Next, a two-measure piano interlude word reinforces the text, “changing everything carefully,” by presenting a rhythmically altered variation of the thematic fragment in the bass. Although the thematic rhythm is completely different (representing change), the melodic integrity is preserved in the four-note descending line (A-flat/G/F/E) in measures 28 through 29, representing the word “careful.” In addition, the eighth-rest between the F and the E could very well represent the notion of “changing everything carefully.” (Example 3.22)

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Ex. 3.22: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” piano left hand, mm. 27-28

A descending octave leap following the text “moving” and another rhythmic disruption caused by a 6/8 measure on the text “perhaps,” also musically express the

text. In addition, the vocal line continues to illustrate the word “perhaps,” with unexpected chromatic alterations, such as the A-natural in measure 41. (Example 3.23)

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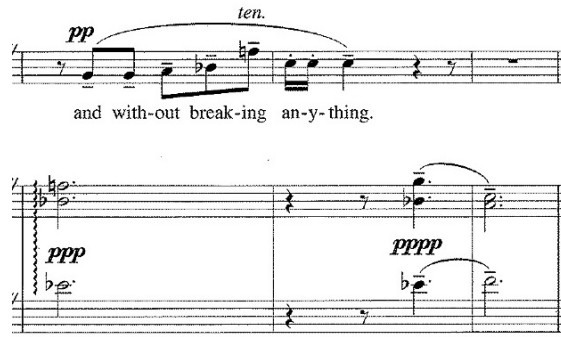
Ex. 3.23: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 39-42

Rhythmic activity slows in the vocal line at measure 43, with further deceleration effected by the combination of a 6/8 metric change and sustained piano chords. Portraying “an inch of air,” a break in measure 45 brings all rhythmic activity to a halt. (Example 3.24)

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Ex. 3.24: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 43-45

Finally, more text painting occurs on the closing phrase, “and without breaking anything;” just as life and growth is restored in the spring, so is the original pitch center—F—restored at the conclusion of the song. (Example 3.25)



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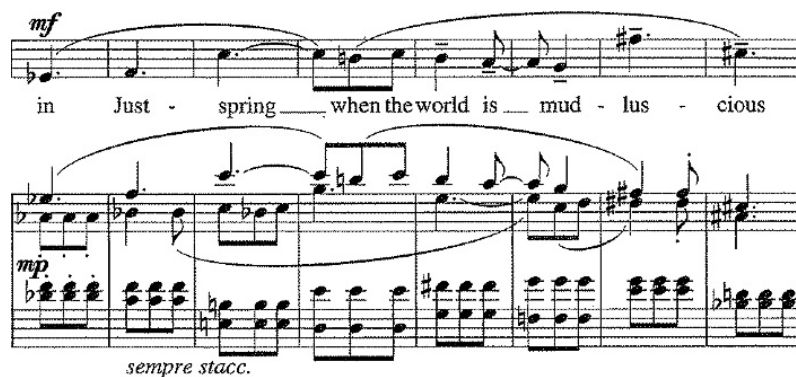
Ex. 3.25: “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” mm. 46-48

Much like the first song in the cycle, which establishes a sense of floating, “Spring is like a perhaps hand” establishes a sensation of passing time and distractions. Argento text paints with the recurring rhythmic pattern to illustrate the impression of passing time, while the interruptions of the rhythmic pattern (metric changes and altered rhythms) represent distractions. Additionally contributing to the compositional style of the song is the dependent relationship between the piano and voice, and the shared melodic and textual material in both verses.

in Just-spring

“in Just-spring,” the third song in Dominick Argento’s *Songs about Spring*, exhibits several of the same musical elements as the first two songs in the cycle. The song is separated into verses, with regular phrasing and shared melodic material. As demonstrated so far in the previous songs, the accompaniment and vocal line in the third song interact in a manner akin to traditional art song. Furthermore, throughout the piece, musical elements are used to express a feeling of youthful liveliness.

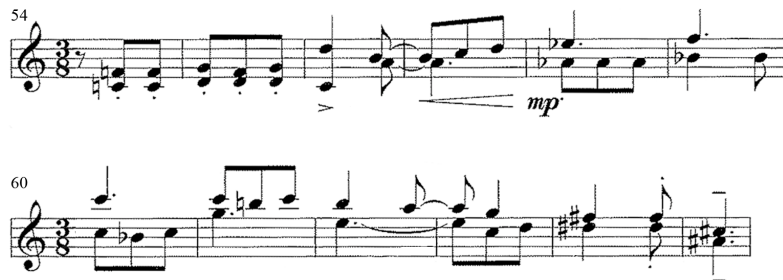
Divided into three distinct versicular sections, this song follows the same structural plan incorporated in the other songs. A theme, featuring several large intervals, is presented with the vocal entrance in the first verse, and is doubled an octave higher in the accompaniment. (Example 3.26)



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Ex. 3.26: “in Just-spring,” mm. 3-10

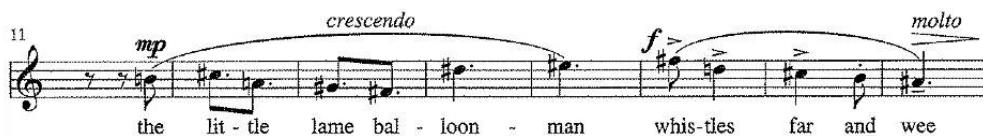
This is the only time the theme is heard in its entirety in the voice, although thematic fragments are heard in the piano at the beginning of each new verse, and at the end of the song. For example, the piano actually launches into the second verse with a variation on the opening theme. (Example 3.27)



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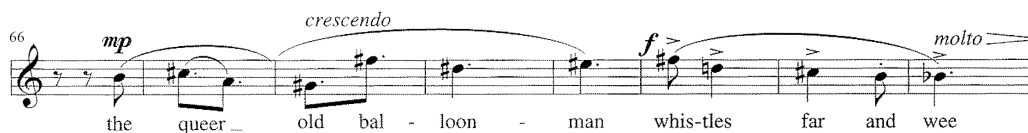
Ex. 3.27: “in Just-spring,” piano right hand, mm. 54-65

When the voice enters on the second phrase of the verse, the only musical discrepancy from the first verse is the F-sharp displaced up an octave on the word “balloonman.” (Example 3.28a and 3.28b)



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Ex. 3.28a: “in Just-spring,” first verse, second phrase, vocal line, mm. 11-18



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Ex. 3.28b: “in Just-spring,” second verse, second phrase, vocal line, mm. 66-70

97 *mf* and the goat - foot - ed bal - loon - *mp* Man whis-tles *dim.* far and *p* wee ____

43

28 *incalzando* *a tempo*

36 *f possible*

and it's spring when the world is pud-dle - won - der - ful

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Ex. 3.29a: “in Just-spring,” mm. 28-49

Additionally representing the impulsive nature of children are the large leaps in the vocal line, such as on the text “and piracies” in measures 25 and 26, (Example 3.29b) and on the text “puddle-wonderful” in measures 45 through 47 (Example 3.29c).

f

and pi - ra - cies

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Ex. 3.29b: “In Just-spring,” vocal line, mm. 25-27



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Ex. 3.29c: “In Just-spring,” vocal line mm. 45-49

Mimicking a sensation of childlike whimsy, the piano slows only momentarily before returning to its driving rhythmic and melodic activity at the beginning of the second verse in measure 50. Melodic skips in the vocal line on the words “hopscotch” and “jump-rope” (heard imitatively in the piano in measures 81 through 83) musically express the text. (Example 3.30)

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Ex. 3.30: “in Just-spring,” mm. 76-83

Unexpectedly, the piano is silent for the beginning of the most high-spirited vocal phrase, “and it’s spring,” which soars to a sustained A-natural, but the one-measure hiatus is short-lived. The piano returns full-force on the word “spring” with the first phrase of the third versicular section in loud, accented thematic fragments. (Example 3.31)

84

molto crescendo *ff*

mf and it's spring

mf *ff* *poco dim.*

8vb

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Ex. 3.31: “in Just-spring,” mm. 84-91

Finally, at the end of the third verse, the dynamic markings for the sustained last word (“wee”) get softer and softer to the end of the song, where the theme is heard one last time in the piano and the instruction “*lunghissima* (until the sound dies)” is added. (Example 3.32)

101

mp *dim.* *p* *perdendo*

Man whis-tles far and wee

8va *loco*

dim. ancora *p* *pp* *sim.* *dim. sempre al fine*

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Ex. 3.32: “in Just-spring,” mm. 101-119

In addition to the decrease in rhythmic activity, the voice and piano fade away, perhaps in a portrayal of a child drifting off to sleep after full day of playful activity.

True to the poetry inspired by actual events in e.e.cummings’ childhood, Argento musically sets the text to convey feelings and sensations of high-spirited youthfulness. In conjunction with other musical elements, including versicular form, regular phrases, repetition of thematic material, and inter dependant vocal and piano parts, “in Just-spring,” adheres to the established compositional style of the previous songs in the cycle.

in Spring comes

“in Spring comes,” the fourth and shortest piece in *Songs about Spring*, is in three versicular sections, delineated by key changes and repetition of melodic material. Instead of a traditional art song interaction, an older form of harmony is used—a canon at the unison—and the accompanist must imitate the vocal line. The vocal line is completely independent of the piano, something unique within the song cycle. Since the texture is minimal, Argento’s musical depiction of the text is subtle; and seems to create a day-dreamy feeling—and a more mature attitude than the other songs in the cycle.

Because the piano is an exact replica of the vocal line, the singer has some freedom to be expressive with each phrase, and the pianist must echo accordingly. Moreover, Argento's tempo marking implies flexibility and interpretive license for the singer. *Adagietto* means either a little faster than *Largo* or a little slower than *Adagio*,³⁹ and *innocentamente* simply means innocently or artlessly. Only a truly mature person can effectively evoke the most basic of child-like characteristics (innocence and artlessness) in an artistic manner. Additionally, the metronome marking (approximately 60) allows for a tempo at the discretion of the singer, to which the accompanist must adhere by following in an imitative manner. Therefore, the song requires a pianist who can be sensitive to the way the singer shapes each phrase and imitate precisely in canon.

³⁹ Lindsey C. Harnsberger, *Alfred's Essential Dictionary of Music*, Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., Los Angeles, 1997.

As the most emotionally introspective song in the song cycle, conveyed primarily by its thin texture, “in Spring comes” departs from the traditional art song presentation. Beginning in E major, the first section consists of a single, independent vocal line precisely imitated by the piano, almost as if it is a dreamy afterthought. (Example 3.33)

Adagietto, innocentamente (♩ = 60 ca.)

in Spring comes (no-one asks his name) a mend-er of things

(quasi eco)

p

Sostenuto pedal down throughout entire song.

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Ex. 3.33: “in Spring comes,” mm. 1-4

Several phrases, such as “(no-one asks his name),” are parenthetical, adding to the sense of reverie. The parenthetical phrases could be comparable to a bit of self-questioning or observation that the singer is not quite ready to confront or share with others. Or, perhaps they could be interpreted as a day-dreaming child speaking some things aloud, and others to itself. Sometimes the phrases are a bit off subject, perhaps representing half-formed new thoughts that are never finished. Argento paints this musically with an accompaniment so sparse that it feels not quite complete, much like a daydream. In addition, the sostenuto pedal remains down for the duration of the song, letting the echo slowly disappear. Combined with the echoing element, the ambiguity of a gradual fade also helps to create a cloudy or dreamy feeling.

Modulating to G-flat major in the second section (measure 9), the text turns to “remaking what otherwise we should have thrown away.” The key change reflects the text, “remaking” the pitch center. (Example 3.34)

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Ex. 3.34: “in Spring comes,” mm. 8-11

Subtle musical depiction occurs in measures 10 through 11, under the text “thrown away,” as the phrase does not return to the previously repeated A-flat. In measure 11, the echoing accompaniment repeats the A-flat four times, representing the “renewing.”

“in Spring comes” presents the first hints of responsibility in the song cycle. Words like “mender,” “patient,” “renewing,” and “remaking” reflect a more mature attitude than any of the previous songs in the cycle. Even so, the lyric melodic line in measures 11 through 17 presents a playful and romantic image of spring under the parenthetical text, “(and whose brook-bright flower-soft bird quick voice loves children and sunlight and mountains.)” (Example 3.35)



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Ex. 3.35: “in Spring comes,” vocal line, mm. 11-17

Following a silence in measure 18, the song returns to E major and the opening melody in the third section (measure 19). Music reflects the words on the text, “comes nobody’ll know,” with the ascending melodic line mimicking the rising contour of a spoken question. (Example 3.36)

18 *pp* in a - pril (but if he should Smile) comes no-bod-y'll know *rall.* 3 *pp* *rall.* 3

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Ex. 3.36: “in Spring comes,” mm. 18-24

Despite its short length, the form of “in Spring comes” still exhibits versicular sections with the modulation in measure 9, and subsequent return to the opening thematic material in the original key in measure 18. Overall, the mood created in this piece is the most introspective and mature of *Songs about Spring*, yet it seems to stir mysterious feelings of wonderment at the resurgence of spring. While the words depict mature attitudes, the music preserves an impulsive and fun mood, illustrated in

the final measure. Regardless of the piano's meticulous imitation of the voice throughout the piece, the final measure strays from the protocol by including extra notes in the bass. (Example 3.37)



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Ex. 3.37: “in Spring comes,” piano, mm. 22-24

In addition to illustrating springtime growth with a thicker texture, this unpredictable change creates sensations of a mesmeric state-of-mind by transforming the accompaniment into something new, as if an added reflection.

Setting this song apart from the others in the cycle is the primacy of the vocal line. The accompanist is reliant on the singer to set the tempo, shape of each phrase, and mood. Also, the piano is like an after thought, like the parenthetical phrases, adding to the sense of reverie, adding extra nuance. Through this independent and minimal setting, the singer can freely expand upon the daydream-like feeling Argento has created.

when faces called flowers float out of the ground

Every song in *Songs about Spring* has versicular sections, but “when faces called flowers float out of the ground” has three distinct verses, connected by thematic material and regular four-measure phrasing. Of all the songs in this cycle, the manner in which the accompaniment supports the text most resembles traditional art song. Furthermore, text is set musically to create sensations described in the poetry, and the meter (3/4) illustrates text from the poem (“the mountains are dancing”), creating a feeling of waltzing throughout the song. Argento stated that “a giddy waltz well suited the cartoon-like flavor of the poem.”⁴⁰

Regular four-measure phrasing immediately stands out in the final song in the cycle. Foreshadowing the regularity to come, the introduction consists of four measures of B-flat bell tones, each given a value of a dotted-half note. When the voice enters, the four-measure phrases continue with measures 5 through 8 forming the first phrase, followed by measures 9 through 12, 13 through 16, and 17 through 20. Rhythms within the phrases have regularity as well. Almost every syllable is assigned the same rhythmic duration of a quarter-note, with few exceptions, giving equal value to stressed and unstressed syllables alike. This uniformity creates a song-like phrase as opposed to a conversational phrase resembling spoken dialogue. (Example 3.38)

⁴⁰ Argento, Author’s E-mail Interview, 166.

Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)

mf when fac - es called flow - ers float out of the

f *mp* *poco pesante*

8 ground and breath - ing is wish - ing and wish - ing is hav - ing— but

sim.

13 keep - ing is down - ward and doubt - ing and nev - er —it's a - pril (yes,

poco cresc. *f* *mf*

18 a - pril; my dar - ling) it's spring! —it's a - pril (yes,

cresc. *più f* *f* *sim.*

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Ex. 3.38: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 1-22

As a conventional art song accompaniment, the B-flat bell tones provide the singer with the opening pitch. In addition, the second vocal pitch in measure 5 is doubled with an E-flat in the bass (measure 5). (Example 3.39)

Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)

when fac - es called

mp
poco pesante

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Ex. 3.39: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground, mm. 1-5

The beginning pitch of the second verse is supplied in the measure of the singer’s entrance. Like the first verse, the second pitch is also reinforced with a pedal point E-flat beginning in measure 46. (Example 3.40)

when ev - ery leaf

mp

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Ex. 3.40: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 45-46

Directly preceding the vocal entrance of the third verse in measures 88 and 89, the opening pitch is presented, although now the singer is simply repeating the same B-

flat from the previous phrase. Again, the second pitch (E-flat) is supported by an E-flat in the piano; however, this time by doubling the singers exact pitch, in addition to providing a bass pedal tone (on beat two instead of one) beginning in measure 90.

(Ex. 3.41)

88 *poco rall.* *p* *a tempo*
when more than was
poco rall. *pp* *a tempo*

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Ex. 3.41: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 88-90

The accompaniment consistently provides harmonic support to the vocal line throughout the song, largely by providing a repeated pedal tone on the downbeat of most measures. Another way in which the accompaniment supports the voice is by doubling the vocal line. In measures 40 through 43, for example, the piano and voice share the same melodic line. (Example 3.42)

f
(yes the moun-tains are danc-ing to - geth-er)
cresc. *f* *sub. mf*

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Ex. 3.42: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 40-43

Abundant with text painting, the theme is first introduced in the piano with the vocal entrance (measures 5 through 8). (Example 3.43a)



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Ex. 3.43a: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” piano, mm. 5-8

The bass line seems to be pushing or springing up like flowers growing out of the ground while the treble line seems to be floating, with ascending and descending scales. Featured throughout the song, this recurring theme returns in octaves during the first piano interlude (measures 27 through 30). (Example 3.43b)



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Ex. 3.43b: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” piano, mm. 26-30

In addition to the musical depiction of text in the piano, the vocal line also seems to spring “out” with a perfect fourth ascending leap on the words “face” in m. 5 and “out” in measure 7. (Example 3.44)

Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a rest and then singing 'when fac - es called flow - ers float out of the'. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, starting with a rest and then playing a series of chords. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)'. The key signature has two flats. The dynamics are marked 'mf' for the vocal line and 'f' for the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment is marked 'poco pesante'.

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Ex. 3.44: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 1-7

Furthermore, the music imitates the text on the word “downward” with a descending octave leap in measures 13 and 14. (Example 3.45)

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a rest and then singing 'keep - ing is down - ward'. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, starting with a rest and then playing a series of chords. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)'. The key signature has two flats. The dynamics are marked 'mf' for the vocal line and 'f' for the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment is marked 'poco pesante'.

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Ex. 3.45: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” vocal line, mm. 13-14

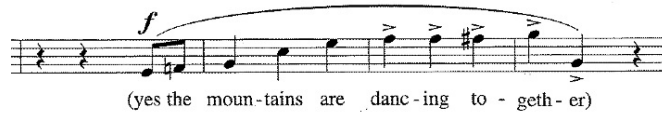
Additional text illustrations occur in the piano under the text, “yes the pretty birds frolic,” and “yes the little fish gambol,” with moving eighth-notes in thirds. Frequent fluctuations in the melodic contour of the accompaniment provide images that might conjure up sensations of fluttering like wings of birds or fish darting to and fro. (Example 3.46)

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top staff is the piano right hand, starting with a rest and then playing a series of chords. The bottom staff is the piano left hand, starting with a rest and then playing a series of chords. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)'. The key signature has two flats. The dynamics are marked 'mf' for the vocal line and 'f' for the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment is marked 'poco pesante'.

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Ex. 3.46: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” piano right hand, mm. 33-37

Text, “yes the mountains are dancing,” is depicted with an ascending, accented, waltz-like vocal line. (Example 3.47)



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Ex. 3.47: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” vocal line, mm. 40-43

Verse two begins following a short piano interlude, in which the texture thins and hemiolas briefly interrupt the waltz with a 2/4 feel, extending the text painting of darting birds and fish. (Example 3.48)



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Ex. 3.48: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” piano, mm. 43-46

While the vocal melody remains unchanged, variations of the original theme return in the accompaniment at the vocal entrance. Then, the accompaniment transforms into something completely different at measure 64, with accented descending arpeggios and fragmented scales in the treble register. (Example 3.49)

62 *cresc.* *più f*

spring! —a — live; we're a — live, dear: it's (kiss me now)

cresc. *f*

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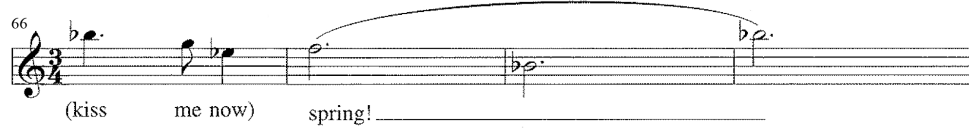
Ex. 3.49: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 62-66

Accents fall on beats one and four, providing a subtle shift into 6/8. On the word “spring,” the vocal line varies from the first verse, with a descending leap from F to B-flat followed by an octave ascending leap to B-flat. This time, the voice seems to be growing, and perhaps represents the giddy excitement of spring and springtime love. (Example 3.50a and 3.50b)

dar - ling) it's spring!

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Ex. 3.50a: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” first verse, vocal line, mm. 22-24

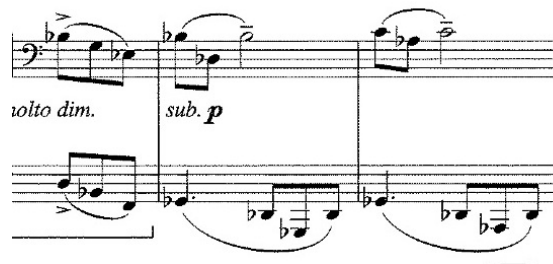


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Ex. 3.50b: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” second verse, vocal line, mm. 66-69

Accompaniment figures shift to a lower register under an altered melody in measure 70. Again, the quick moving large intervals in the accompaniment provide an image which supports feelings of the hovering and quivering of the birds and fish.

(Example 3.51)



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Ex. 3.51: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” piano, mm. 69-71

This time, “the mountains are dancing” is repeated in legato vocal lines, while a decrease in rhythmic activity, diminuendo, and small tempo stretch provide a shift into the third, most philosophical verse. (Example 3.52)

81

mf *dim.*

(now the moun - tains are danc - ing, the moun - tains are danc - ing, the

86

poco rall. *p*

moun - tains) when

poco rall.

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Ex. 3.52: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 81-89

The original vocal melody returns at the *a tempo* in the third verse; however, the accompaniment is distinctly different, with downward rolled chords in the treble on the downbeat, followed by a single E-flat pedal-point in the bass on beat two.

(Example 3.53)

p *a tempo*

when more than was lost has been found has been found

pp *a tempo* *sempre arpeggiando sim.*

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Ex. 3.53: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 89-93

In addition to the calmer accompaniment, the softer dynamic in both voice and piano draws more attention to the text, “when more than was lost has been found,” and “having is giving and giving is living.” Increasing rhythmic and melodic activity build intensity as the vocalist sings, “it’s spring” (measure 102), when the original accompaniment from verse one reappears. (Example 3.54)

100 *mf* *crescendo*

win - ter and cring - ing — it's spring (all our night be - comes day) o, it's

mp

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Ex. 3.54: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 100-104

At measure 111, the original piano theme returns in an interlude. Descending and ascending scales in thirds, beginning in measure 113, illustrate the birds “diving” in the sky and fish “climbing” in the sea. (Example 3.55)

111

115

all the pret-ty birds dive to the heart of the

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Ex. 3.55: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 111-118

An escalation in intensity, including a *crescendo*, an increase in successive attack activity and accents, a greater registral span in the piano, and sustained vocal high notes such as the B-flat in measures 127 through 131, begins in measure 124 and continues through to the final measure. (Example 3.56)

18
124 *crescendo*
moun - tains are danc - ing; are danc - ing) o, _____

mf

127 *ff*
it's

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Ex. 3.56: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 124-131

Descending and ascending arpeggios continue to create sensations of diving and climbing. Accompanying the final word, “spring,” is the final return of the energetic piano theme, ending the piece with a waltz feel while illustrating the dancing mountains.

“when faces called flowers float out of the ground” continues the pattern of musically expressing the feelings described in the poetry. Images of the birds flying and the fish swimming are illustrated throughout the song. Moreover, musical elements such as form, meter, tempo, accented pedal points, and regular phrasing create a sensation of dancing and whirling.

Conclusion

Each song in *Songs about Spring* has several marked similarities. The songs are versicular in nature, connected with recurring thematic material. In addition, most have regular metric phrasing, and a song-like (as opposed to a conversational) style. All, with the exception of the dreamy “in Spring comes,” resemble traditional art song in the manner in which the piano supports the voice.

Through Argento’s text setting, every song creates a unique feeling, emotion, or mood. While *Songs about Spring* is connected loosely with a spring theme, each song in the cycle inspires a different sensation, and could be performed individually without losing any of its meaning.

Chapter Four: *Miss Manners on Music*

Miss Manners on Music is the latest prose song cycle by Dominick Argento and derives its text from newspaper columns written by Judith Martin (Miss Manners). The prose text is written in question and answer format—a simple dialogue—always in complete sentences, with no repetition as occurs in *Songs about Spring*. Therefore, because Argento was not limited to following metric and word stresses which are pre-established in poetry, the prose text lends itself to a through-composed structure, allowing him more freedom to structure each song according to his vision. In addition, the non-fiction prose provides characters, which Argento illustrates in the music. As opposed to Argento's settings of the e.e.cummings poetry, which attempts to create feelings and moods, his settings of Miss Manners' prose seem more focused on creating characters. In contrast to the internal emotions manifested in Argento's setting of the e.e.cummings poetry, his prose setting seeks to establish a more external atmosphere surrounding the characters in each song. Musical elements in *Miss Manners on Music* define multiple characters, both in the vocal line and accompaniment. Sections emerge in the prose composition, but unlike in *Songs about Spring*, they are not defined or inhibited by the text. For instance, in "Manners at the Ballet" sections are determined by musical factors such as changes of tempo, meter, register, and dynamic level, while text overlaps from section to section. Examining such elements as the form and structure of each song and the cycle as a whole, as well as melodic, harmonic, and thematic material, this analysis will study

the various ways in which the music and text interact. Moreover, this analysis will include the musical factors that play a role in illustrating characters and specific environments in the prose.

I. Prologue

Miss Manners on Music consists of seven advice columns penned by Miss Manners (Judith Martin). With the exception of the first song, “Prologue,” the songs in this cycle illustrate two characters in a question and answer dialogue: Gentle Reader (question) and Miss Manners (answer). In contrast, “Prologue” represents only one character, Miss Manners, offering advice to the audience. However, additional supporting characters are depicted in all of the songs through Argento’s musical reflection of the prose, and “Prologue” is no exception. Stylistically, “Prologue” is through-composed and set in a declamatory manner, with an independent vocal line, and an accompaniment similar to the piano score of an opera.

“Prologue” establishes Miss Manners’ character, with her thoughts on “the adage that Silence is Golden.”⁴¹ As she speaks directly to the audience, the rhythms in the vocal line help to establish a declamatory style. For example, accented syllables are placed on strong beats, as in “Si-” of “Silence” and “Gold-” of “Golden,” appearing on beats one and three, respectively, providing the correct accent on the correct syllable. (Example 4.1)

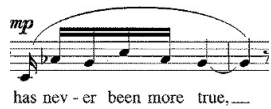


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Ex. 4.1: “Prologue,” vocal line, m. 3

⁴¹ Dominick Argento, *Collected Song Cycles*, High Voice, Boosey and Hawkes, distributed by Hal Leonard, Milwaukee, WI, 121.

Words that would naturally receive more emphasis or time in speech, are given longer rhythmic values, such as the word “true” in the phrase “has never been more true.” Every syllable is assigned a sixteenth note except for “true,” which is given two tied quarter notes. (Example 4.2)



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Ex. 4.2: “Prologue,” vocal line, m. 4

This method of text setting that imitates the rhythms and pitch intonations of a conversation occurs unfailingly throughout the song and, indeed throughout the entire cycle. In addition, phrases are frequently irregular in length, adding to the natural speech-like and non-traditional nature of the piece. Not only do phrases differ in numbers of measures, but meters often vary within each phrase. For example, the meter changes three times in the three-and-a-half measure phrase, “The fact is that all this noise is rude.”⁴² (Example 4.3)

⁴² Ibid., 122.

25 *tratt.* **Con moto** (♩ = 70 ca.)

The fact is that all this noise is rude. It is rude to the

mf sonoro

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Ex. 4.3: “Prologue,” mm. 25-28

The following phrase, “It is rude to the captured audience of half-listeners, and what is more it is rude to the music,”⁴³ spans six-and-a-half measures and includes four meter changes. (Example 4.4)

28

rude. It is rude to the cap-tured aud-i-ence of half-list-ners, and what is more it is rude to the mu-sic.

f *decresc.* *p*

f *decresc.* *p*

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Ex. 4.4: “Prologue,” mm. 28-33

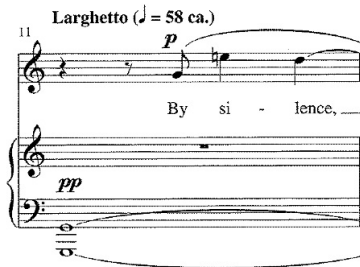
⁴³ Ibid., 122-3.

Concurrence of music and prose occurs throughout the text. For example, “Silence,” in measure 3, is given a *pianissimo* dynamic, as well as minimal accompaniment. In measure 11, the same word is given a *piano* dynamic and for accompaniment, a *pianissimo* solitary pitch (G) in low register octaves in the piano. (Example 4.5a and 4.5b)



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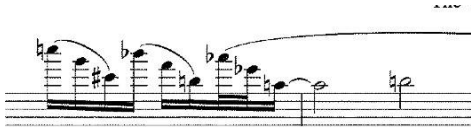
Ex. 4.5a: “Prologue,” m. 3



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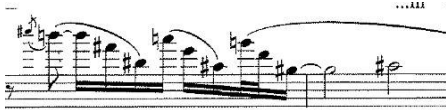
Ex. 4.5b: “Prologue,” m. 11

Another example of text painting appears in measure 13, after the text, “bird tweet.” Although the high-registered, arpeggiated sixteenth note passage is presented first in measure 1, it begins with an ornamental grace note in measure 13, imitating bird-song. (Example 4.6a and 4.6b)



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Ex. 4.6a: “Prologue,” piano right hand, mm. 1-2



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Ex. 4.6b: “Prologue,” piano right hand, mm. 13-14

Other than Miss Manners herself, two additional featured elements are portrayed in the accompaniment of this prose setting: background music, and “music worth listening to.”⁴⁴ The rolled, slightly dissonant chords in measures 19 through 22 under the text, “Restaurants, hotel lobbies and shops are wired for sound”⁴⁵ fit into the former category (Example 4.7a); as does a short quote of Mozart’s “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik”⁴⁶, in measures 23 through 24, under the text, “In private houses...the fancy sound of mild classical music used as a ‘background.’”⁴⁷ (Example 4.7b)

⁴⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁶ Serenade No. 13 in G Major, K. 525, “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik,” Second Movement, “Romance.”

⁴⁷ Argento, *Collected Song Cycles*, 122.

Poco più largo
(*mf*)

Rest-au - rants, _ ho - tel lob-bies and shops _ are wired for

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Ex. 4.7a: “Prologue,” mm. 19-20

Stesso tempo
mf *mp* *p*

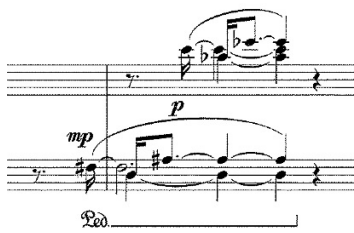
In pri-vate hous-es... _ the fan-cy sound _ of mild class-i-cal mu-sic used as a “back - ground.” The

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Ex. 4.7b: “Prologue,” mm. 23-24

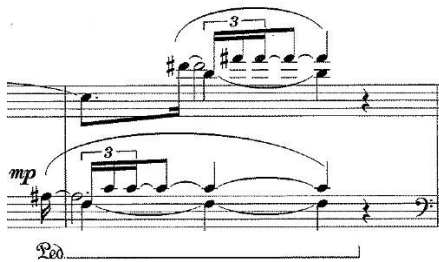
Corresponding with the latter character category (“music worth listening to”), is the bird-like passage from measures 1 and 13, as well as a theme heard throughout the song. First heard in measures 5 through 6, and then in 9 through 10, this theme is repeated twice at the close of the song in measures 38 through 39, after the text, “Music worth list’ning to is worth list’ning to.”⁴⁸ (Example 4.8a, 4.8b, 4.8c)

⁴⁸ Ibid., 123.



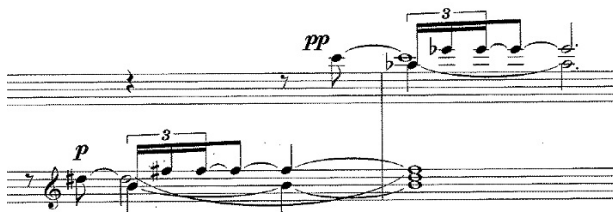
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Ex. 4.8a: “Prologue,” piano, mm. 5-6



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Ex. 4.8b: “Prologue,” piano, mm. 9-10



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Ex. 4.8c: “Prologue,” piano, mm. 38-39

While “Prologue” is unified by a few measures of repeated thematic material, it is set in a through-composed, conversational form. Bearing no resemblance to a traditional strophic art song, the music serves the prose text in a fitting declamatory style. The vocal line is set completely independently from the accompaniment, and interacts with the piano in an operatic manner. Additionally, Argento’s musical

setting of this Miss Manners column strives to establish characters rather than create moods or feelings, as he did in his poetry settings in *Songs about Spring*. His approach to text setting and musical reflection of the text established in this song will prove to be consistent throughout *Miss Manners on Music*.

II. Manners at a Concert

Several characters and atmospheric elements are depicted in “Manners at a Concert,” the second song in Argento’s *Miss Manners on Music*. Setting the stage for an instrumental concert, the first element, an instrumental solo, is established in the four-measure piano introduction, which is the opening statement from Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony*.⁴⁹ At the end of the four measures, Gentle Reader, a character, interrupts with a loud, “Shush!” exclaimed by the vocalist. The unfolding scenario is one that any regular concertgoer has probably experienced: in an attempt to quiet one rude audience member, another equally rude audience member creates a greater disruption. This interruption is followed by a full measure of silence. (Example 4.9)

Allegro moderato (♩ = 104 ca.)

pp

sfz

Shush!

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Ex. 4.9: “Manners at a Concert,” mm. 1-5

Gentle Reader’s question begins in measure 6, in unison with the piano in octaves. (Example 4.10)

⁴⁹ Karla J Qualls, “Miss Manners on Music: A New Prose Song Cycle for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano by Dominick Argento,” Thesis (Mus. Ed.)--Florida State University, 2002, 42.

Allegretto comodo (♩ = 69 ca.)

6 *mp*

Dear Miss Man - ners:

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 8/8. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto comodo' with a quarter note equal to approximately 69 beats per minute. The dynamic is marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The lyrics 'Dear Miss Man - ners:' are written below the voice staff. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex pattern in the left hand.

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Ex. 4.10: “Manners at a Concert,” mm. 6-8

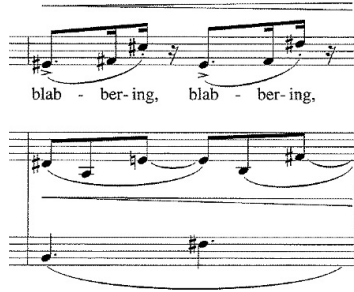
While the question (really more of a statement) “Dear Miss Manners” being asked initially begins with the piano and voice in uniformity: “Dear Miss Manners,” the level of rhythmic and harmonic independence quickly increases as the voice becomes another character, a rude audience talker:

I believe in shushing people who talk during concerts. I didn’t pay to hear them blabbering, blabbering, blabbering. Yet a friend who went with me told me I was being rude in telling people to shut up. It seems to me that what rudeness is, is talking during music.⁵⁰

As the question describes the “people who talk during concerts,” several rhythmic discrepancies and harmonic dissonances develop between the vocal line and the accompaniment, portraying the “blabbering” speaker clashing with the instrumental solo. For example, the dotted-eighth/sixteenth/sixteenth note rhythm in the vocal line against straight eighth notes in the piano right hand, in measure 15, depicts the disruptive nature of the talking audience member. To further illustrate the disturbance, an E-sharp in the voice clashes with a D-sharp in the piano on beat one,

⁵⁰ Argento, *Collected Song Cycles*, 124-5.

and an E-sharp in the voice clashes with an E-natural and F-sharp in the piano on beat four. (Example 4.11)

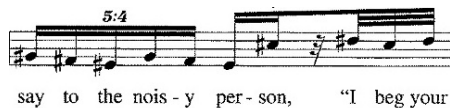


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Ex. 4.11: “Manners at a Concert,” m. 15

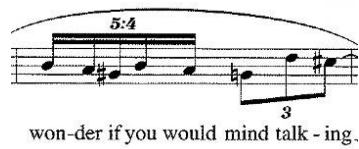
Time signatures and tempi also play an active role in the character delineation of “Manners at a Concert.” Every time the symphony orchestra is featured, the time signature is 3/4 with an *Allegro moderato* tempo marking. When Gentle Reader or the rude audience talker is featured, the time signature is 6/8, with a tempo marking of *Allegretto comodo*. Miss Manners, the fourth character, is finally introduced in measure 32 with an *Adagio* tempo and meter of 2/4. Miss Manners’ response is accompanied in the piano with sustained chords, allowing her character to “set the stage” for the tonal colors within a triadic-sounding chord progression. Triplets and quintuplets are utilized in these phrases, creating a conversational vocal line.

(Example 4.12a, 4.12b, 4.12c, and 4.12d)



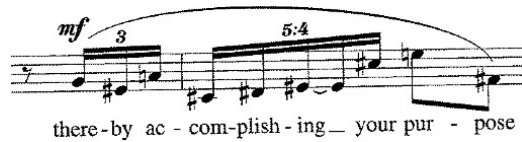
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Ex 4.12a: “Manners at a Concert,” vocal line, m. 37



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Ex. 4.12b: “Manners at a Concert,” vocal line, m. 40



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Ex. 4.12c: “Manners at a Concert,” vocal line, mm. 46-47



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Ex. 4.12d: “Manners at a Concert,” vocal line, m. 48

As soon as Miss Manners finishes her response, the orchestral character re-emerges in measure 51 with a 3/4 meter at the original tempo, and low-register lyric phrases from *Unfinished Symphony* in the piano. At this point, the vocalist enters with a *sotto voce* hum, as if the Gentle Reader is humming along softly while enjoying the concert, finally free of disruptions. (Example 4.13)

51 *Come prima* *sotto voce*

Mmmm.

p

55

pp

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Ex. 4.13: "Manners at a Concert," mm. 51-58

III. Manners at the Ballet

Several layers of musical expression of the text are apparent in “Manners at the Ballet,” moving through various combinations of meter and tempo. Like the previous songs in *Miss Manners on Music*, several characters are established within the song. Unlike the songs in *Songs about Spring*, this song is not versicular. Instead, musical elements such as tempo, meter, register, and dynamics fluctuate, while text flows above these changes. Furthermore, text phrasing is irregular, following conversational speech patterns.

Throughout the song, multiple "characters" can be heard. The singer portrays two characters: Gentle Reader and Miss Manners, while the pianist also presents dual roles: one in the treble register (representing the orchestra) and one in the bass (depicting the audience). Introduced in the first section is the orchestra, with “Delicato” (Delicate) instructing the pianist to play the treble accompaniment—a recurring motif of descending and ascending septuplet arpeggios in the right hand against triplets in the left hand—with gracefulness. (Example 4.14)



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Ex. 4.14: “Manners at the Ballet,” piano, m. 1

The harp-like accompaniment remains in the treble register, becoming more than mere accompaniment as it adds to the overall ballet atmosphere of the piece.

Musical expression of the text is evident with dual tonalities of C major in the right hand of the piano and E minor in the left, supporting the uncertainty in the question, “Dear Miss Manners: when is it appropriate to clap at the ballet?”.⁵¹

(Example 4.15)

Andante grazioso (♩ = 64 ca.)

mp

Dear Miss Man - ners: _____ when is it ap - pro - pri - ate _____

p delicato

7:8

3

Ped.

rall.

3

to clap at the bal - let? _____

7:8

3

Ped.

pp

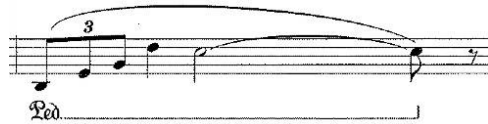
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Ex. 4.15: “Manners at the Ballet,” mm. 1-4

⁵¹ Ibid., 128.

Additionally, the rising contour of the triplets in the left hand signals an inquiry, the same way in which the inflection of the voice tends to rise at the end of a question.

(Example 4.16)



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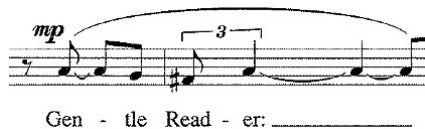
Ex. 4.16: “Manners at the Ballet,” piano left hand, m. 2

Musical depiction of the text continues with both the right and left hands in the piano, and the vocal line in the key of D major in mm. 5-8, at which point Miss Manners begins her response, “Gentle Reader: Serious minded people believe...,”⁵² with a perfect musical imitation of the first half of the Gentle Reader’s question, in the new key. (Examples 4.17a and 4.17b)



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Ex. 4.17a: “Miss Manners at the Ballet,” question, vocal line, m. 1, beats 4-5-m. 2, beats 1-3

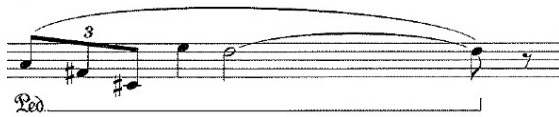


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Ex. 4.17b: “Manners at the Ballet,” response, vocal line, m. 5, beats 4-5-m. 6, beats 1-3

⁵² Ibid.

At this point, the unvarying major tonality in all parts reflects confidence in her answer. As opposed to the ascending triplets in the bass line from the previous example, which emulates a question, now descending triplets in the bass line imitate the natural fall in pitch that typically happens when a speaker concludes a statement. (Example 4.18)



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Ex. 4.18: “Manners at the Ballet,” piano left hand, m. 6

The tonal center returns to E minor at mm. 9-10. (Example 4.19)

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Ex. 4.19: “Manners at the Ballet,” mm. 8-9

Perhaps Argento was following a traditionally held perception that a major tonality sounds “happy” and a minor tonality sounds “sad” or “serious,” and used the shift from major to minor to reflect the attitudes of the “serious minded people” who frown upon the inappropriate clapping described in the text. On the other hand, the inability

to settle in one tonality may also mirror the diverse viewpoints and behaviors of the audience members.

Rhythmically and melodically independent of the accompaniment—much like recitative in an opera aria—the vocal line follows spoken syntax. Syllables are stressed in such a way that resembles normal dialogue. For example, in m. 2, the first syllable in “Manners” falls on beat one, giving a natural emphasis to the accented syllable. This also occurs in m. 6 on the word, “Reader.” (Example 4.20a and 4.20b)



Man - ners: .

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Ex. 4.20a: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 2, beat 1



Read - er: .

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Ex. 4.20b: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 6, beat 1

Additionally, shorter note values are assigned to words of lesser relative importance.

For example, the sixteenth notes followed by eighth note triplets for the text, “is it appropriate,” in m. 2, follows a natural rhythmic speaking pattern. (Example 4.21)

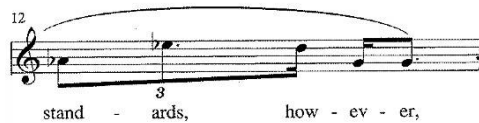


Man - ners: . when is it ap-pro-pri - ate

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Ex. 4.21: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 2

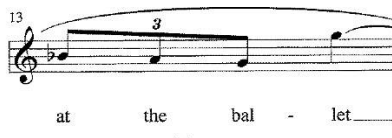
Another example of rhythmic and pitch patterns resembling regular speech is in m. 12, on the text, “however.” The triplet sixteenth note on the syllable “how”, followed by a sixteenth note on “ev-,” followed by a dotted eighth note on “-er,” respect the customary rhythmic pattern of the word. This, combined with the descent to a G for the second syllable (“ev-”) on a stronger beat, emphasizes the correct syllable. (Example 4.22)



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Ex. 4.22: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 12, beats 1-2

In addition, the octave leap on the word “ballet” in measure 13 accurately accents the second syllable with a higher pitch. (Example 4.23)



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Ex. 4.23: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 13, beats 1-2

As previously stated, there are several points at which the text overlaps with changes in musical ideas, preventing any versical perception, and contributing to the through-composed nature of the song. For example, Miss Manners’ answer:

Gentle Reader: Serious minded people believe that clapping should be confined to the bows at the end of performances and detest any such manifestations while music is being played. By prevailing

standards, however, applause is also customary at the ballet for any stage set more elaborate than one painted tree and an overgrown mushroom stool; at the appearance of a favorite dancer, and for any three leaps or four turns.⁵³

begins over the harp-like accompaniment and continues to the end of the song, contributing to the through-composed nature of the piece. At m. 11, the contradictory “however” is musically reflected in a register shift and lack of a clearly defined tonal center. (Example 4.24)

Poco meno mosso (♩ = 60 ca.)

11 *mf* By pre-vail-ing

12 *f* *mf* stand-ards, how-ev-er, ap-plause is al-so cust-om-ar-y

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Ex. 4.24: “Manners at the Ballet,” mm. 11-12

⁵³ Ibid., 128-132.

Also, for the first time the piano changes from exclusively treble to exclusively bass register, supporting the “audience” role. The contour of the left hand changes once more as descending triplets are replaced with triplets of alternating up-and-down leaps, perhaps illustrating the discrepancies in audience protocol with their directional uncertainty. (Example 4.25)



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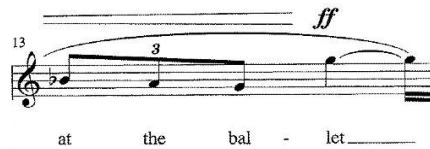
Ex. 4.25: “Manners at the Ballet,” piano left hand, m. 11

As the motif continues, an unclear tonal center could reflect the inappropriate actions of the audience, or even perhaps, the disapproval of Miss Manners and the “serious minded people” at the disruptive applause. (Example 4.26)

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Ex. 4.26: “Manners at the Ballet,” m. 13

In combination with the faster tempo and dissonances, a crescendo ending with a fortissimo marking appears at the octave leap on the word “ballet,” possibly suggesting the image of a leaping dancer. (Example 4.27)



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Ex. 4.27: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 13, beats 1-3

Supporting the visual image of a ballet dancer, the piano accompaniment resumes its “orchestral” role with a shift back to treble registration and the recurring septuplet/triplet motif. (Example 4.28)

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Ex. 4.28: “Manners at the Ballet,” m. 13, beats 1-3

Increased rhythmic activity, thicker texture, faster tempo, and a rising melodic line heighten the dramatic intensity, while the text “one painted tree” overlaps from the end of one musical idea into another—ending at the “molto vivace” tempo change

in measure 15. The orchestra and audience characters are featured once again.

(Example 4.29)

Molto vivace (♩ = 150 ca.)

14

one paint - ed tree

mp

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Ex. 4.29: “Manners at the Ballet,” mm. 14-15

In addition to the tempo change, new meters are introduced, as 2/2 and 7/4 are utilized for the first time. At this point, the left hand drops to the bass register in a fairly static role as the audience, while the right hand, as the orchestra, begins a new ascending pattern with a repetitive eighth-double-sixteenth note rhythm, and the voice sustains a single note. (Example 4.30)

tree

mp

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Ex. 4.30: “Manners at the Ballet,” m. 15

Then, the voice and piano exchange rhythmic and melodic activity in m. 16, while the piano sustains a diminished seventh chord. (Example 4.31)

16

— and — an o - ver - grown mush - room ...

f

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Ex. 4.31: “Manners at the Ballet,” m. 16

This repeats twice more, each time at a higher register in the piano and voice, creating an exaggerated sense of expectation. It is as if the orchestra plays a climactic fanfare, followed by noisy admiration of the audience at each presented set piece, dancer, or executed skill: “any stage set more elaborate than one painted tree” (mm. 13-15), “an overgrown mushroom stool” (mm. 16-17), “a favorite dancer” (mm. 18-19), and “three leaps or four turns” (mm. 20-22). (Example 4.32)

13 *ff* *poco trattenuto*

at the bal - let for an - y stage set more e - lab - o - rate than

f *ff*

7:8

3

3

Red.

Molto vivace ($\text{♩} = 150 \text{ ca.}$)

14

one paint - ed tree

mp

Red.

131

16

— and — an o - ver - grown mush - room — stool;

f

mp

Ped.

18

at the ap - pear - ance of a fav - or - ite dan - cer, —

f

mp

Ped.

20

molto rall. e. cresc.

— and — for an - y three — leaps — or four —

f

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Ex. 4.32: "Manners at the Ballet," mm. 13-21

Momentarily absent is the ballet-like recurring motif, reinforcing the idea that the audience is not applauding for the quality of the ballet, but for superficial (at least in the eyes of the “serious-minded”) set pieces and tricks.

Returning to the original tempo in m. 22, a thicker texture is introduced, with three piano staves—representing the orchestra and audience together, and an optional vocal line. Additional text painting occurs in the vocal line from mm. 20-25, textually juxtaposing the previous text’s final climax of the ballet. Leaping and turning dancers are represented with a staccato ascending arpeggio on the word “leaps” (Example 4.33a) and a recurring four-note pattern—F-sharp/E/A/G—after the words “four turns” (Examples 4.33b and 4.33c).



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Ex. 4.33a: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 20, beats 6-7-m. 21, beat 1



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Ex. 4.33b: “Manners at the Ballet,” vocal line, m. 21, beats 2-5





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Ex. 4.33c: “Manners at the Ballet,” optional vocal line, mm. 22-25

Unquestionably in C major, the ending illustrates confident finality in Miss Manners’ answer with a clearly established tonality, and ends with a flourish of ascending arpeggios typical of a ballet finale. (Example 4.34)

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Ex. 4.34: “Manners at the Ballet,” mm. 24-25

“Manners on Ballet” consists ultimately of a through-composed question and answer format, tied together with a recurring motif in the piano (the orchestra, which only strays from the returning theme in the third section, to play the fanfare). Unlike

the versical sections in “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?,” text in the vocal line overlaps changes in accompaniment in “Miss Manners at the Ballet,” connecting them into one continuous narrative. In addition to dual roles represented in both the vocal and piano parts, evidence of Argento’s operatic compositional style is also present in the way the vocal line and accompaniment relate. The independent, declamatory vocal line portrays the characters, whereas the equally independent accompaniment provides the color and word painting, creating a specific atmosphere around the characters—much like sets, costumes, and the orchestra in a ballet. Every element of this piece works together to develop and reveal characters and an external setting, as opposed to an internal feeling or mood, as in *Songs about Spring*.

IV. Manners for Contemporary Music

Argento continues the through-composed, conversational style of text setting in “Manners for Contemporary Music,” the fourth song in Argento’s *Miss Manners on Music*, in which he recreates the atmosphere of a contemporary musical performance. This setting is expressed in the first two measures with loud, pedal-sustained ascending lines resulting in a tone clusters. (Example 4.35)

Con brio (♩ = 76 ca.)

f sdegnato

Dear Miss Manners:

mf f

mf f

Ped.

Ped.

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Ex. 4.35: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” mm. 1-2

This proves to be thematic throughout Gentle Reader’s question, musically supporting the concert venue with the stereotypical dissonant sounds of contemporary music. Subsequent to its introduction in the first two measures, it reappears as Gentle Reader complains of new compositions that “grate on my nerves like a piece of chalk scrapped [sic] across a blackboard.” (Example 4.36a and 4.36b)

6

ex - cept grate on my nerves

mf *f*

Ped.

Ex. 4.36a: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” m. 6

134

7

like a piece of chalk scrapped a - cross a black - board.

mf *f*

Ped.

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Ex. 4.36b: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” m. 7

Following the pattern set in the previous songs, Gentle Reader’s questions begin with the text, “Dear Miss Manners,” following a conversational syntax. “Dear” is assigned a longer note value (tied eighth notes) than “Miss” or “Man-,” while “Man-” is assigned the shortest note value of all (a sixteenth note) and “-ners” is assigned the longest (a dotted eighth note tied to a quarter note). (Example 4.37)

f sdegnato

Dear _ Miss Man - ners:

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Ex. 4.37: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, m. 2

Phrases are irregular in length, and include rhythmic patterns resembling those of regular speech. For example, the second phrase is one and a half measures (Example 4.38a), while the third phrase is four measures (Example 4.38b).



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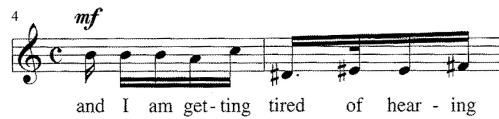
Ex. 4.38a: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, mm. 3-4

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Ex. 4.38b: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, mm. 4-8

Within those phrases, rhythmic patterns conform to those in spoken conversation. For example, in measure 5, the word “tired” receives a longer duration than the previous words in the phrase and falls on the downbeat, emphasizing the

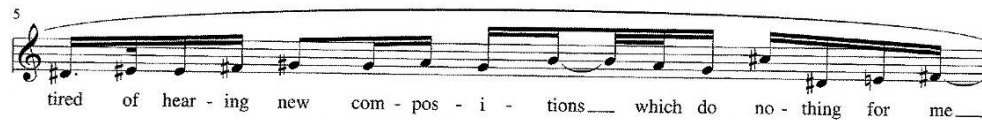
word that would naturally receive more stress if the sentence were spoken. (Example 4.39)



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Ex. 4.39: Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, m. 4-5

Additionally, because the syllable “-si-” of “composition” falls on beat three, and the syllable “no-” of “nothing” falls on beat four (a strong beat, when compared with the second syllable, “-thing,” which falls after beat four) words are correctly accented (Example 4.40).



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Ex. 4.40: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, m. 5

Because “no-” is placed on a C-sharp and “-thing” descends to a D-sharp, Argento’s use of pitch reinforces the accurate word stress. Then, in measure 6, the text “grate on my nerves” is painted with tenuto markings and triplet eighth-notes, accenting the words and illustrating Gentle Reader’s frustration. (Example 4.41)



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Ex. 4.41: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” vocal line, m. 6, beats 2-4

Another example of Argento's conversational text setting occurs in measures 9 through 10 with the question: "Is it polite to boo such a piece?" First, the syllable "po-" of "polite" is placed in a weak position compared with "-lite," which is in a stronger position (the fourth beat) and has a longer note duration (a dotted eighth-note as opposed to a sixteenth-note). Then, the most important word in the question, "boo," is placed on the downbeat of the next measure, giving it the greatest weight. (Example 4.42)



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Ex. 4.42: "Manners for Contemporary Music," vocal line, mm. 9-10

Musical imitation of the text appears in measure 15, under the text, "suffer in silence." The dissonant accompaniment fades to nothing, with a "lunga" (long) fermata, before Miss Manners responds. (Example 4.43)

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Ex. 4.43: "Manners for Contemporary Music," mm. 15-16

When Miss Manners begins her answer, a musical change (including a new meter) reflects her more sophisticated approach to showing disapproval: withholding applause as opposed to outright booing. Dissonances give way to consonant, albeit non-traditional, chord progressions. Miss Manners' melody moves away from each chord, but brings her to the new consonance on each downbeat. (Example 4.44)

Con serenità (♩ = 42 ca.)

17 Miss Man - ners is not a - gainst the pro - per ex - press - ion of dis -

19 pleas - ure, as well as pleas - ure, at mu - si - cal e - vents.

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Ex. 4.44: "Manners for Contemporary Music," mm. 17-20

The thematic dissonant ascending lines and tone clusters reappear, however, beginning in measure 29, as Miss Manners' answer shifts to educate Gentle Reader on typical reasons for booing: "If you boo a piece at its premiere, the disapproval is

assumed to be for the composer, and it is those occasions where people had such high old times in Paris and elsewhere.”⁵⁴ (Example 4.45)

29 *Con moto* (♩ = 66 ca.)

mp
If you boo a piece —

pp
Ped.

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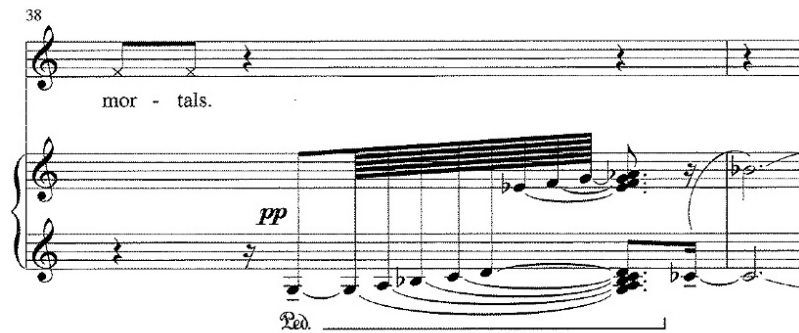
Ex. 4.45: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” mm. 29-30

Then, after a break, Miss Manners actually interrupts the music to speak. (Example 4.46)

(spoken)

How-ev - er tearing up seats in the auditorium
as a sign of æsthetic disapproval usually turned out
to have been an historical error, marking one for
future generations as a major philistine scorning
composers who later turned out to be regarded as im-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 137-138.



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Ex. 4.46: “Manners for Contemporary Music,” mm. 37-39

The piano follows with the ascending line/tone cluster theme, reminding the listener that he/she is hearing a contemporary performance.

Argento’s musical setting of prose in this piece illustrates the characters Gentle Reader and Miss Manners, and also supports an environment of a contemporary concert in which audience members outwardly show condemnation. Perhaps in addition to their stereotypical contemporary sound, the tone clusters also illustrate the audience’s negative reaction to the dissonant music. By musically creating the scene described in Gentle Reader’s question, Argento attempts to draw the audience into the story, much as he has done with the previous three songs. Miss Manners finishes her answer without offering a conclusion, leaving it up to Gentle Reader to decide which approach of showing disapproval is best. Argento illustrates this with an unresolved Augmented G chord, and the audience, as a supporting character, is also left to make a choice. (Example 4.47)

40

lat - er per - form - ance, _____ your com - ment is

Ped.

42

rall. *p*

tak - en as crit - i - cal _____ of the per - form - ers. _____

pp

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Ex. 4.47: "Manners on Contemporary Music," mm. 40-43

V. Manners at a Church Recital

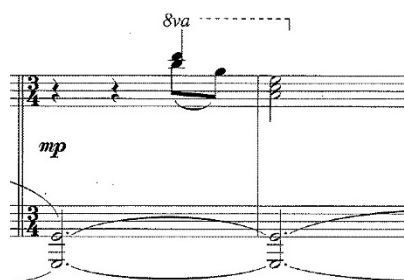
Gentle Reader commences the fifth song in *Miss Manners on Music* with an unaccompanied, “Dear Miss Manners” in 6/8 meter. Adhering to the established conversational style of this song cycle, Argento stresses words and syllables in a speech-like manner. The opening phrase is a good example of this technique, with “Dear” and “Miss” receiving more time (dotted quarter-notes) than “Man-” of “Manners” (an eighth-note), and the placement of “Man-” on the downbeat of measure 2. (Example 4.48)



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Ex. 4.48: “Manners at a Church Recital,” vocal line mm. 1-2

Argento musically sets the stage for a church vocal recital with traditional hymn-like harmonies and lyric melodies. In the piano, broken and triadic chords are diatonic, as opposed to the dissonant accompaniment in “Manners for Contemporary Music.” An unusual feature of this song is Argento’s choice of extreme registration, possibly representing the great highs and lows typically heard from a church organ. For example, the low G heard in m. 11 paired with the extremely high broken G-major chord and A-minor chord heard in m. 11 through 12, could represent a pipe organ registration. (Example 4.49)



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Ex. 4.49: “Manners at a Church Recital,” piano, mm. 11-12

In addition to the main characters (Gentle Reader and Miss Manners), two supporting elements are portrayed in “Manners at a Church Recital:” the character of Malcolm, and the concert music setting. Malcolm, Gentle Readers’ rude friend in joint attendance at the church recital, plays a major role. Gentle Reader actually quotes Malcolm in measures 14 through 17, and paraphrases him in measures 23 through 26. (Example 4.50a and 4.50b)



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Ex. 4.50a: “Manners at a Church Recital,” vocal line, mm. 14-17

20 Since then, Mal - colm ____ has men - tioned at least

23 four times ____ that I so em - bar - rased him ____ by my "ig - nor - ant be -

25 hav - ior" ____ that he want - ed to crawl un - der - neath the pew!

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Ex. 4.50b: "Manners at a Church Recital," vocal line, mm. 20-26

Gentle Reader later refers to how Malcolm's comments made him/her feel. (Example 4.51)

Mal - colm made me feel like a coun - try bump - kin.

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Ex. 4.51: "Manners at a Church Recital," vocal line, mm. 37-38

Miss Manners, in turn, refers to Malcolm's behavior twice in her response: in measures 42 through 48 and measures 78 through 80. (Example 4.52a and 4.52b)

42 Too ____ bad Mal - colm did - n't crawl und - er the pew. He would be bet - ter off

45 out of sight ____ be - cause he com - mit - ted three ser - i - ous breach - es of e - ti - quette dur - ing the re - cit - al ____

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Ex. 4.52a: "Manners at a Church Recital," vocal line, mm. 42-48



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Ex. 4.52b: “Manners at a Church Recital,” vocal line, mm. 78-80

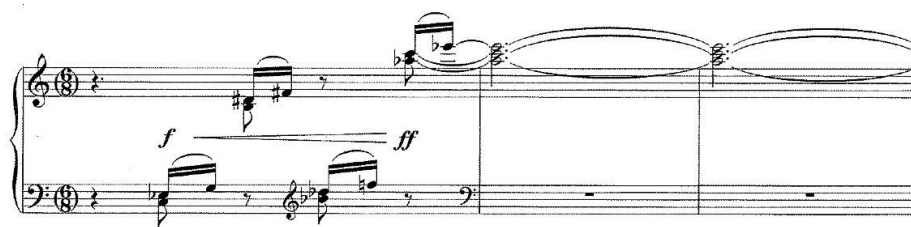
Another supporting element is the concert music setting, which is featured throughout the song. The lilting thematic melody consisting of descending broken sixteenth-note chords, representing the recital music, is first heard in measures 2 through 5. (Example 4.53)



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Ex. 4.53: ‘Manners at a Church Recital,’ piano, mm. 2-4

This theme and thematic fragments are heard throughout Gentle Readers’ question. A variation of the theme appears beginning in measure 19, with ascending arpeggiated sixteenth-note chords. (Example 4.54)



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Ex. 4.54: “Manners at a Church Recital,” piano, mm. 19-21

When Gentle Reader's inquiry shifts to a description of how Malcolm's comments made him/her feel, the successive attack activity slows and texture thins in the accompaniment, drawing more attention to the discomfort and embarrassment of Gentle Reader. (Example 4.55)

Andante cantabile (♩ = 62-63)

mp

33 I am in my fif - ties ____ and have at-tend - ed man - y re - cit - als and stage plays. _

mp

36 Mal - colm made me feel like a coun - try bump-kin.

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Ex. 4.55: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 33-38

As Miss Manners begins her response, the accompaniment becomes more melodically active in the treble register, and is accompanied by tonal chord progressions. However, when Miss Manners reprimands Malcolm for his "serious breaches of etiquette," such as "whispering, correcting, and jabbing," the recital music returns. (Examples 4.56a and 4.56b)

41 *molto tratt.* *mp* *a tempo*

straight! Gen-tle Read-er: Too _ bad Mal-coll did-n't crawl und-er the

44

pew. He would be bet-ter off out of sight _ be-cause he com-mit-ted three ser-i-ous

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Ex. 4.56a: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 41-46

48 *Poco più mosso* (♩ = 69 ca.) *cresc. poco a poco*

cit - al _ (whis-per - ing, _ cor-rect - ing, _ and jab - bing) _

p *cresc. poco a poco*

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Ex. 4.56b: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 48-51

As Miss Manners references Malcolm's more severe infractions of chastising Gentle Reader "at least four times" after the recital, the meter returns to 6/8 and the tempo quickens. (Example 4.57)

52

Allegretto (♩ = 106 ca.)

f

and, by your count, four af - ter - ward.

f

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Ex. 4.57: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 52-54

Several musical elements express the text in measure 71, as Miss Manners addresses a "lack of interest" assumed by a minimum of audience reaction in Italian opera houses. The meter changes to 4/4, a more commonly used meter, and accompaniment texture thins to a single low F, perhaps representing an indifferent audience. (Example 4.58)

70

mf

sid-ered to show a la-ment-a-ble lack of int - 'rest. So while it is

mf

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Ex. 4.58: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 70-71

The next measure (m. 72) returns to 3/4 meter and the inverted recital music, as Miss Manners describes the safe expression adopted by the “idiot” recital attendee.

(Example 4.59)

72 *poco a poco decresc.*
true that a trance-like state, — eyes blank and lips slight-ly curved in the id - i - ot — pos -
8va

74
i - tion, — is the saf - est stance to
(8)---

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Ex. 4.59: “Manners at a Church Recital,” mm. 72-74

Finally, the last measure recaps the recital music first heard in measure 2, this time in 2/4 meter and ending with a low staccato E-flat (the fifth of the A-flat major chord) in octaves instead of a sustained chord. (Example 4.60)



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Ex. 4.60: “Manners at a Church Recital,” mm. 81

As he has done in all of the previous songs, Argento has established a new surrounding—this time of a church recital. He sets the stage with a specific style of music—this time lyric melodies and traditional diatonic harmonies. He paints words and characters in many layers, and in both subtle and obvious ways. Setting text in a conversational, speech-like manner helps to create Gentle Reader and Miss Manners in a tangible way. This declamatory style differentiates the prose settings in *Miss Manners on Music* from the poetic settings in *Songs about Spring*. Furthermore, each song in this cycle relies on the other songs to serve as a comparison and a contrast to the new atmosphere. The contrast in settings heard musically when listening from one song to the next stands out far more than it would if only one song were heard individually.

VI. Manners at the Opera

Dominick Argento called “Manners at the Opera” his favorite song from this cycle due to the fact that it is “Pucciniesque.”⁵⁵ In this song, Argento creates an operatic atmosphere, complete with an audience and an opera orchestra. Similar to a nineteenth-century opera scene, the song is divided into five sections: a recitative and aria, a second recitative and aria, and finally a codetta. Gentle Reader’s question spans the first three sections, while Miss Manners’ answer follows in the final aria and codetta.

The nine measure piano introduction is a quote from the end of Verdi’s *Rigoletto*,⁵⁶ setting the stage for the final moments of an opera. Abundant use of tremolo and chromatic descending scales in octaves helps to create the effect of a Puccini-like verismo opera. (Example 4.61)

The musical score for the piano introduction of "Manners at the Opera" is presented in two systems. The first system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It starts with a piano introduction marked *pp* (pianissimo) and *Allegro* (♩ = 84). The introduction features a chromatic descending scale in the right hand and a tremolo in the left hand. The second system continues the piece, marked *ff* (fortissimo), and features a chromatic descending scale in the right hand and a tremolo in the left hand. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings and tempo indications.

⁵⁵ Argento, Author’s E-mail Interview, 170.

⁵⁶ Qualls, 64.

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Ex 4.61: “Manners at the Opera,” mm. 1-10

Tremolo continues in the bass when the voice enters in measure 10. Written to sound like two sighs with a slurred B-double flat to A-flat, the text “Dear Miss” is repeated in measure 11. (Example 4.62)

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Ex. 4.62: “Manners at the Opera,” vocal line, mm. 10-11

Then, as the accompaniment thins in measure 13, a sustained D-flat in octaves shifts the focus to the singer in the “Recitative.” (Example 4.63)

11 *ff* *f* *Recitative mf*

Dear Miss... Man - ners: I am ter - ri - bly up - set a - bout

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Ex. 4.63: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 11-14

Resembling a traditional nineteenth-century verismo aria recitative typical of Puccini, the accompaniment is sparse and occasionally interjects a non-traditional chord progression. (Example 4.64)

19 *mp* *ten.* *mf*

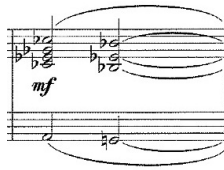
touched the stage, the op - ra stars not yet gone for - ward to take their bows, and throngs of

mp *mf (non arp.)*

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Ex. 4.64: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 19-22

Planing, frequently used by Puccini, is present in measures 26 and 28. (Example 4.65a and 4.65b)



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Ex. 4.65a: “Manners at the Opera,” piano, m. 26



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Ex. 4.65b: “Manners at the Opera,” piano, m. 28

The recitative setting lends itself to Argento’s conversational manner of setting prose.

Elements featured in the other songs in *Miss Manners on Music* are also used in this piece. For example, the first sentence of Gentle Reader’s question, “I am terribly upset about some people’s deplorable conduct at the conclusion of a recent op’ra,” contains triplets and quintuplets to provide a speech-like quality to the phrase. In addition, the contour of “I am terribly upset” follows that of a typical spoken sentence, with the ascending line of “terribly up-” and descending half step on “-set” (on the downbeat of the next measure) giving stress to “-set.” (Example 4.66)



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Ex. 4.66: “Manners at the Opera,” vocal line, mm. 13-17

Beginning under the final word of the recitative, “suppers,” a return to the opening tremolo and descending chromatic scales from *Rigoletto* provides an interlude between the recitative and aria sections. (Example 4.67)

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Ex. 4.67: “Manners at the Opera,” mm. 30-33

Changing to 3/4 meter and a new tempo, the aria begins in measure 34 with a form similar to a cavatina, with its simple accompaniment, or the first part of a cabaletta with its *cantabile* vocal line. Although the vocal lines in the aria conform to a more melodic structure, they still maintain a conversational style. Use of staccato on the first phrase adds to the speech-like quality of the phrases. On several occasions, the use of quadruplets in the 3/4 meter also helps preserve the sense of spoken dialogue. Accompaniment in this aria section is a staccato chord on the downbeat of each measure, again eluding to the simple style of a cavatina or the first part of a cabaletta. Although the chord progressions travel through several keys, the key center in this section is in D-flat minor. (Example 4.68)

Tempo giusto (♩ = 52 ca.)

34 *mf*

My be - ing a - ble to rise and ap - plaud the play - ers on stage -

mf

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Ex. 4.68: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 34-38

The drama escalates with a sustained high A-flat in the voice and a return to the tremolo and descending chromaticism from *Rigoletto* in the accompaniment of measure 58. Following a theatrical build of *fortissimo* arpeggios, an accented dissonant cluster chord, typical of verismo opera, suddenly brings the music to a halt as the Gentle Reader reaches a boiling point. (Example 4.69)

Mosso (♩ = 80 ca.)

rows, I am per-son-al-ly an-gered. And good-ness knows what the per-

form-ers must think see-ing a sea of backs.

ff

sfz

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Ex. 4.69: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 58-63

After a short break, perhaps allowing Gentle Reader to take a breath and gain control of his/her emotions, the second recitative begins. Two sustained *mezzo piano* and *piano* chords serve as a minimal accompaniment, permitting the singer to sing at a softer, more controlled dynamic level. Gentle Reader's final inquiry, "Would you please help?" follows the natural ascending line of a spoken question. (Example 4.70)

72 *mp*

Would you please help?

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Ex. 4.70: "Manners at the Opera," vocal line mm. 72-3

Miss Manners' response begins in the final two measures of this recitative (measures 74 and 75), with a *dolce* marking and a *rallentando*. However, the second aria begins in measure 76, with an abrupt tempo change to *Allegro agitato*. Use of conventional bel canto broken-chord accompaniment delineates the new section with a remarkable variation in style similar to that of a cabaletta. The arpeggiated bass line (on the beat) combined with a chorded treble line (on the off beat), both stacatto, closely resembles a Bellini or Donizetti aria accompaniment. (Example 4.71)

72 *mp* Would you please help? *p dolce* Gen - - - tle *rall.*

76 *Allegro agitato (♩ = 80 ca.)* *mf con slancio* Read-er: Well, act-ual-ly, no. In fact, as a vio-lent op-'ra

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Ex. 4.71: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 72-78

This style of accompaniment continues through measure 87. Then, when Miss Manners begins describing audience reactions as ritualistic, the piano texture thins to a single repeated E in the treble and bass, word painting "ritualizing" and "no real

expression of opinion.” In each subsequent measure the bass line’s pitch descends obliquely, relative to the treble line’s E, which remains through the first half of measure 98. (Example 4.72a and 4.72b)

Stesso tempo ma meno agitato

form - ly re - spect - ful ap - plause is the re - sult of rit - u - al -

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Ex. 4.72a: “Manners at the Opera,” mm. 88-90

mit - ted. If Miss

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Ex. 4.72b: “Manners at the Opera,” mm. 97-98

Reinforcing the musical portrayal of lack of expression, the vocal line loses rhythmic variety, using only dotted half-, half-, and quarter-notes. (Example 4.73)

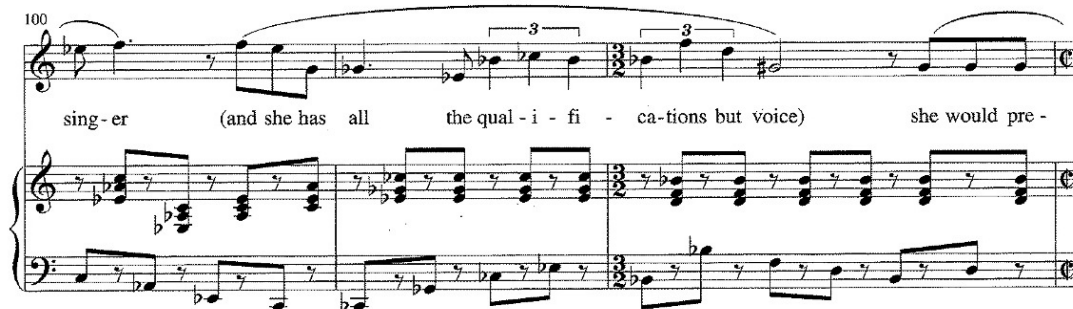
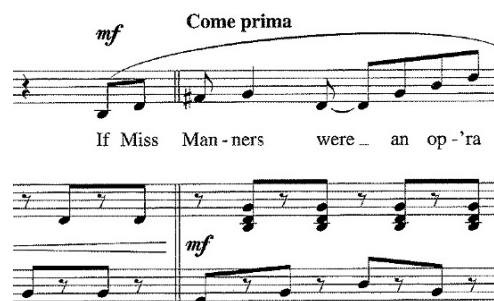
form - ly re - spect - ful ap - plause is the re - sult of rit - u - al -



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Ex. 4.73: “Manners at the Opera,” vocal line, mm. 88-93

In measure 99, the full bel canto accompaniment returns as Miss Manners renders her opinion. Rhythmic variety returns in the vocal line as well. (Example 4.74)



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Ex. 4.74: “Manners at the Opera,” mm. 98-102

The bel canto accompaniment ends in measure 110, and measures 111- 120 provide a transition into the Puccini-like codetta, in which the vocalist sings a vocalize on the word, “Ah!” In keeping with Argento’s operatic approach, this final section of the song even includes the instruction *Bel canto*. (Example 4.75)

110 *Molto moderato* ($\text{♩} = 60$) *mp*

(e-ven if it al - so means oc-cas-ion-al

114 *poco a poco rallentando e decrescendo*

ob-vious-ly mis-guid-ed dis-ap - prov - al) she would pre - fer that to

118 *molto tratt.* *p* *bel canto*

hear-ing the same tep-id po - lite - ness _ for her tri-umphs and her fail - ures. — Ah! —

121 *Sognando* ($\text{♩} = 72 \text{ ca.}$)

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Ex. 4.75: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 110-124

Multiple characters are portrayed through the musical setting of this advice column. As always, Gentle Reader and Miss Manners play starring roles. An additional atmospheric element, the opera orchestra, is featured in each section. A monotonous audience is also illustrated in measures 88 through 98. Then, an enthusiastic audience is depicted in measures 103 through 111, as well as in measures 120-130 (the codetta vocalize). Argento uses the music to set the stage for what he refers to as a “Pucciniesque” opera aria.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Argento, Author’s E-mail Interview, 170.

VII. Envoi

Miss Manners on Music ends with a short and sassy text, “Envoi.” *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* defines envoi as: “the concluding remarks to a poem, essay, or book;”⁵⁸ and the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* expounds: “especially: a short final stanza of a ballad serving as a summary or dedication.”⁵⁹ Argento appropriately provides a musical conclusion to the song cycle by incorporating thematic fragments from the first song, “Prologue.” Beginning in the first measure, an extended version of the bird-song from “Prologue” is used. (Example 4.76)

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Ex. 4.76: “Envoi,” mm. 1-2

Although the three-staved texture in this piece is thicker than that of the first song, the accompaniment is almost exclusively reconstructed from “Prologue.” The theme from “Prologue” appears in measures 3 through 7, as Gentle Reader asks,

⁵⁸ Henry Bosley Woolf, editor-in-chief, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Pocket Books, Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1974, 242.

⁵⁹ *Merriam Webster’s Online Dictionary*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/envoi>.

“Dear Miss Manners: Who says there is a ‘right’ way of doing things and a wrong?”⁶⁰

(Example 4.77)

5 *a tempo* *mf*

Dear Miss Manners: Who says there is a

7 *accel.*

'right' way of doing things and a wrong?

mf *p*

Red. Red.

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Ex. 4.77: “Envoi,” mm. 5-8

Serving as a transition into Miss Manners’ reply, the bird-song reappears in measures 8 and 9. (Example 4.78)

⁶⁰ Argento, *Collected Song Cycles*, 156-157.



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Ex. 4.78: “Envoi,” third piano staff, mm. 8-9

A third theme from the first song enters under Miss Manners’ answer, “Gentle Reader: Miss Manners does.”⁶¹ (Example 4.79)

Sostenuto (♩ = 60 ca.) *pp dolce* *molto tratt.*

10

Gen - tle Read - er: Miss Man - ners does.

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Ex. 4.79: “Envoi,” mm. 10-12

After a silence, the singer continues a cappella, “You want to make something of it?” in a testy *forte*. This is echoed by a brief piano flourish, ending the cycle. (Example 4.80)

⁶¹ Ibid., 157.

f
You want to make some-thing of it?

mp *molto* *sffz*

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Ex. 4.80: “Envoi,” mm. 12-15

Although the text is brief in this final piece, the conversational setting of each phrase is preserved. Again, “Man-” of “Manners” is accented through rhythmic value and placement on a strong beat. (Example 4.81)

a tempo *mf*
Dear Miss Man - ners:

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Ex. 4.81: “Envoi,” vocal line, m. 5

In addition, as the most stressed word in the phrase, “Who says there is a ‘right’ way of doing things and a wrong?” “right” is given the highest pitch and placed on a downbeat. “Wrong,” the other accented word in the phrase, is given the lowest pitch and also placed on a downbeat. (Example 4.82)

Who says there is a ‘right’ way of do-ing things_ and a wrong?

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Ex. 4.82: “Envoi,” vocal line, mm. 6-8

Conclusion

Argento uses musical elements to support the text in both the early and later song cycles, but in *Miss Manners on Music*, they are used to create characters, set the stage, and narrate the stories. He illustrates a different setting in each of the songs, taking the audience on a journey from the concert stage to the ballet to the opera. Supporting characters are invented through the music, and serve to further depict each scenario. In contrast to each song in *Songs about Spring*, in which the music creates a general feeling or mood, all of the diverse atmospheres in *Miss Manners on Music* painted through Argento's music rely on each other to complete a story. Part of the meaning would be lost if an individual song were excerpted from the whole cycle. For this reason, it is this writer's opinion that *Miss Manners on Music* should be performed as a set, rather than as selections presented as individual songs.

Chapter Five: Comparison

Dominick Argento began an active career of composing for the voice in the 1950's with his first song cycle, *Songs about Spring*. His affinity for the solo voice continues to this day, encompassing one of his latest song cycles, *Miss Manners on Music*, composed in 1998. The two song cycles have several defining characteristics that stylistically set each work apart from the other one, beginning with the obvious difference: *Songs about Spring* is set to poetry, while *Miss Manners on Music* is set to prose. However, when more circumspectly comparing and contrasting these two cycles, five distinct differences emerge: versicular sections as opposed to a through-composed style; regular and metrical phrasing as opposed to irregularly metered and more complex rhythmic phrasing; non-conversational as opposed to conversational text settings; a traditional art song relationship between the voice and the piano as opposed to an operatic style of recitative and aria, and a "piano reduction" style of accompaniment; and text setting to invoke feelings as opposed to text setting to portray characters or create specific atmospheres.

Form

One major dissimilarity between *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music* is the form of each individual song within the two cycles. The verses in "spring is like a perhaps hand" and "when faces called flowers float out of the ground," and versicular sections in the other three songs in *Songs about Spring*, are a stark contrast with each of the through-composed songs in *Miss Manners on Music*. Repetition of melodic

themes in the voice unites every song in the early cycle; however, repetition of melodic themes in the voice rarely, if ever, occurs in the later cycle.

In the following examples from *Songs about Spring*, thematic material in the vocal line connects each section. Measures 3 through 8 of “spring is like a perhaps hand” are nearly identical to measures 29 through 34. (Examples 5.1a and 5.1b)



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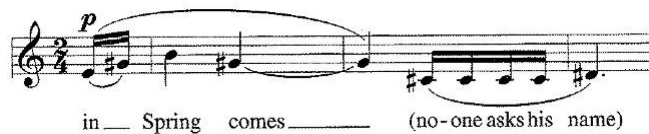
Ex. 5.1a: “spring is like a perhaps hand,” vocal line, mm. 3-8



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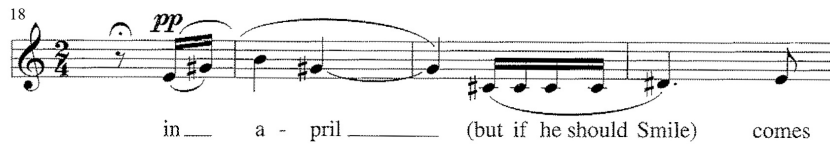
Ex. 5.1b: “spring is like a perhaps hand,” vocal line, mm. 29-34

Additionally, measures 1 through 4 of “in Spring comes” are musically identical to measures 18 through 21. (Examples 5.1c and 5.1d)



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Ex. 5.1c: “in Spring comes,” vocal line, mm. 1-3



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Ex. 5.1d: “in Spring comes,” vocal line, mm. 18-21

Phrasing

Incongruities in the phrasing of songs stylistically set the two song cycles apart from one another. Upon comparison of the first few phrases of most songs in *Songs about Spring* with the first few phrases of any song in *Miss Manners on Music*, regular metric phrases in the former contrast with irregular phrases in the latter. For example, regular four-measure phrases occur in “when faces called flowers float out of the ground.” (Example 5.2a) On the contrary, “Manners at a Church Recital” begins with irregular phrases. (Examples 5.2b)

Tempo di valse (♩. = 63 ca.)

mf when fac - es called flow - ers float out of the

f *mp* *poco pesante*

8 ground and breath - ing is wish - ing and wish - ing is hav - ing— but

sim.

13 *poco cresc.* *f* keep - ing is down - ward and doubt - ing and nev - er —it's a - pril (yes,

mf

18 *cresc.* *più f* a - pril; my dar - ling) it's spring! —it's a - pril (yes,

f *sim.*

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Ex. 5.2a: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 1-22

Con brio ($\text{♩} = 76 \text{ ca.}$) *f sdegnato*

Dear - Miss Man - ners:

mf *f* *mf* *f*

Red.

3 I at-tend the sym-phon-y reg - u-lar-ly, and I am get-ting

5 tired of hear - ing new com - pos - i - tions which do no - thing for me

mf *poco sfz*

6 ex - cept grate on my nerves

mf *f*

Red.

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Ex. 5.2b: "Manners for Contemporary Music," mm. 1-6

The same is true when contrasting the phrasing of “in Just-spring” with that of “Prologue.” Regular eight-measure phrases occur consistently in “in Just-spring,” as demonstrated in the first two phrases: measures 3 through 10, and measures 12 through 19 (with an eighth-note pick-up from measure 11). A regular rhythm is established with a strong downbeat in each measure. Quite the opposite occurs in the first few phrases in “Prologue.” Phrasing is irregular, and includes a meter change from 4/4 to 3/4 in the second phrase. As in typical conversation, no standard rhythm is established. (Examples 5.3a and 5.3b)

Leggero e gioioso (♩. = 112 ca.)

mf

in Just - spring — when the world is — mud - lus - cious

sfz-p *mp* *sempre stacc.*

11 *mp* *crescendo* *f* *molto* *mf*

the lit - tle lame bal - loon - man whis - tles far and wee and

sub p *crescendo* *mf*

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Ex. 5.3a: “in Just-spring,” mm. 1-19

Andante ($\text{♩} = 63 \text{ ca.}$) *accel.* *rall.* *mp* *sub. pp* *a tempo*

The ad-age that Si-lence is Gold-en

has nev-er been more true, in Miss Man-ners' o-pin-ion. Its val-ue is

ris-ing a-ston-ish-ing-ly ev-'ry day and it is get-ting cor-res-

9 pond-ing-ly hard-er — for most peo-ple to have an-y. —

11 *Larghetto* (♩ = 58 ca.) *p* By si - lence, — *dolce* Miss Man-ners means some-thing you can hear a bird

13 *pp* *a tempo accel.* tweet in. — *rall. mp* ...in - di - vid-u - als — and in-dust - ries — have com-

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Ex. 5.3b: "Prologue," mm. 1-13

Non-Conversational/Conversational

Another element that contributes to the differentiation of the two cycles is the manner in which Argento stresses words and individual syllables. While text is

generally accurately stressed in both song cycles, only *Miss Manners on Music* incorporates a more natural conversational style of text setting and stressing syllables.

In fact, in an interview on Minnesota Public Radio, Argento stated: “One of the reasons I’ve almost exclusively set prose—letters, diaries, journals, and pamphlets—and very few poems is that prose lets *me* make the rhythm.”⁶² (Emphasis added.)

Argento elaborated on his statement in another interview with Carla Qualls:

You can’t say a sentence in English where every syllable is even like a sixteenth note...there’s always one syllable somewhere in the middle of a group that is a little longer than others.... You can’t do that with all even notes. And that’s what brings around the [metric markings of] fives and the sevens so much in my music...I’ve got a thing about the English language, and I want to set it as clearly as it is spoken.⁶³

By using triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, septuplets, dotted-rhythms, and short note values to set text syllabically in *Miss Manners on Music*, Argento achieves a natural speech-like quality. The setting of prose text in “Manners on Contemporary Music” is syllabic, creating a conversational vocal line. (Example 5.4a)

21 *ten.* Al-though too tim-id her-self to boo, she does not re-cog-nize the need to thank per-

23 4:3 form-ing art-ists for their ef-forts and there-fore in-ter-prets ap-plause as a show of ap-

⁶² Qualls, 19-20.

⁶³ Ibid., 80.



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Ex. 5.4a: “Manners on Contemporary Music,” vocal line, mm. 21-26

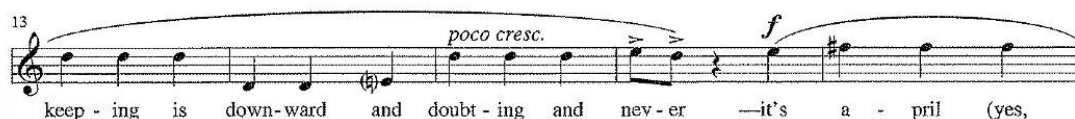
By contrast, the musical setting of the poetic text in “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?” contains many melismas, stretching syllable durations in a manner uncharacteristic of speech. (Example 5.4b)



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Ex. 5.4b: “who knows if the moon’s a balloon?” vocal line, mm. 9-11

Another example from *Songs about Spring* is from the final song of the cycle. “when faces called flowers float out of the ground” has many words set with even quarter-note rhythms, giving equal note value to the syllables. For instance, the steady quarter-note rhythm in measures 13 through 17 varies only once, in measure 16, on the accented text, “never.” Every other syllable in the example receives an identical duration, unlike a typical speech pattern. (Ex. 5.4c)



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Ex. 5.4c: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” vocal line, mm. 13-17

Traditional Art Song Style/Operatic Style

While the poetry in *Songs about Spring* is set in a traditional art song fashion, the prose in *Miss Manners on Music* is declamatory and conversational in nature. The way in which the vocal lines interact dependently with the piano in the *Songs about Spring* resembles the interrelationship of text and music in standard art song, such as Giordani's "Caro mio ben," Schubert's "Heidenröslein," or Fauré's "Les Roses d'Ispahan." Often, the piano doubles the vocal line and always supports the voice. For example, much of the vocal melisma in measures 9 through 11 of "who knows if the moon's a balloon?" is doubled in the piano accompaniment. (Example 5.5a)

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, 8/8 time, starting at measure 9. It features a melisma on the word "sky" that continues through measure 11. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The piano part includes a melisma on the word "filled with" that also continues through measure 11. The score includes dynamic markings: *f* (forte) above the vocal line in measure 9, *poco cresc.* (poco crescendo) above the piano part in measure 10, and *mf* (mezzo-forte) above the piano part in measure 11. The lyrics "sky" and "filled with" are written below the vocal line.

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Ex. 5.5a: "who knows if the moon's a balloon?" mm. 9-11

Other songs in the cycle employ this method. Another example is the phrase "yes the mountains are dancing together" in "when faces called flowers float out of the ground" (measures 40 through 43). (Example 5.5b)

f

(yes the moun-tains are danc-ing to - geth - er)

cresc. *f* *sub. mf*

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Ex. 5.5b: “when faces called flowers float out of the ground,” mm. 40-43

In contrast, the vocal lines in the *Miss Manners on Music* tend to be more independent from the piano, and the accompaniments are often sparse, written to more closely resemble opera aria and recitative accompaniments than traditional art song accompaniments. For example, in measures 1 through 12 of “Manners at a Church Recital,” the piano has little to do with the vocal line, and vice versa. Instead, the piano programmatically creates a recital atmosphere, while the singer portrays a character: Gentle Reader. (Example 5.5c)

Quasi allegretto (♩ = 74 ca.)

f Dear Miss Man - ners: _____ *mf* I re-cent - ly at-tend-ed a

vo - cal re - cit - al with Mal - colm, _____ a friend from my

5

Stesso movimento (♩ = ♩ del prec.)

mp church choir. _____ *mf* Dur-ing one par-tic - u - lar ren-

9

8va

The musical score is for a piano and voice piece. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 8/8 time, marked 'Quasi allegretto' with a tempo of approximately 74 quarter notes per minute. The vocal line begins with a forte (f) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-forte (mf) section. The piano accompaniment features a strong bass line. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the vocal line with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The third system (measures 9-12) is marked 'Stesso movimento' and changes to 3/4 time. The vocal line starts with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and then moves to mezzo-forte (mf). The piano accompaniment includes a section marked '8va' (octave) in the right hand. The lyrics are: 'Dear Miss Manners: I recently attended a vocal recital with Malcolm, a friend from my church choir. During one particular ren-'.

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Ex. 5.5c: "Manners at a Church Recital," mm. 1-12

In addition, the next example, from "Manners at the Opera," is indicative of the independent and declamatory vocal line typical of all songs in *Miss Manners on*

Music. Accompaniment is minimal, helping to direct the listener's attention to the speech-like vocal line. (Example 5.5d)

15 some peo-ple's de-plor-a-ble con-duct at the con-clus-ion of a re-cent op-'ra. Bare-ly had the fin-al cur-tain

19 touched the stage, the op-'ra stars ... not yet gone for-ward to take their bows, and throngs of

23 what I con-sid-er ex-treme-ly rude pa-trons start-ed a fast ex-it up the aisles, sup-pos-ed-

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Ex. 5.5d: "Manners at the Opera," mm. 15-26

Feelings/Characters and Specific Atmospheres

Overall, the first four differences combine to create the primary effectual difference between the two styles: the poetry settings create feelings, while the prose settings narrate a story, creating characters and supporting atmospheres. *Songs about Spring* is a collection of songs connected by a single idea: the joys of spring. However, each song could stand alone, expressing a single feeling or mood. In contrast, the songs in *Miss Manners on Music* work together to tell a continuous story. Each song sets a new stage, and creates a unique environment. Without the support of the other songs, a portion of the picture of the entire cycle is lost. Leading characters are developed along with supporting characters and atmospheric elements, both through the text and music.

Conclusion

Stylistic differences evidenced in Dominick Argento's song cycles, *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*, can be attributed to his choice of text. This study has confirmed that his use of poetry or prose largely explains the contrasting styles. Other related factors, such as whether or not the text tells a story or is a group of texts connected with a mutual subject, have also contributed to the contrasting styles. In his e-mail interview, Argento explained: "My earliest 'cycles' (*Songs about Spring* and the *Six Eliz[abethan] Songs*) are not really cycles as I later understood the term. They are simply sets of songs sharing a common theme. Later on I preferred

‘cycles’ that, in effect, told a story or portrayed a character.”⁶⁴ He went on to say that at the time *Songs about Spring* was written, he assumed songs required a poetic text.⁶⁵ When pressed for an explanation of the differences in his song cycles that tell a story versus those that express feelings, Argento responded:

What I gradually came to realize is that a group or collection of songs is not always a cycle. Eg., "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" is definitely not a cycle and one can sing a few of the songs, all of them, rearrange them etc., and little harm is done. In short, they are not organic. With works I call cycles, not to do them exactly as the composer wished changes them.⁶⁶

Despite the composer’s statement: “I never think of my music in terms of compositional ‘style.’ I just write the music I feel is needed to achieve the result I want the piece to have,”⁶⁷ two distinctly different styles emerge when examining *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music* side-by-side. What the author has concluded through this study is that Argento lets the text dictate his compositional style. If he chooses texts that create a feeling, he paints the words musically to create a mood and enhance that feeling. If he chooses texts that tell a story, he paints the words musically to set a stage and tell a story.

Dominick Argento almost serendipitously began what could be argued to be the most recognizable aspect of his career—composing for the solo voice, whether in song or in opera—with the cycle *Songs about Spring*. Nearly fifty years later that

⁶⁴ Argento, Author’s E-mail Interview, 166.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 174. *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* has many settings—Gustav Mahler’s being the most popular.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 168.

affinity continued with the composition of *Miss Manners on Music*. However, the latter song cycle does not overshadow the former in compositional technique. Rather, the differences seem to be based more on choice of material than on either Argento's obvious musical maturation or his deliberate commitment to writing for the solo voice that grew during the almost half-century that separates the two compositions.

As this study has demonstrated, five big elements of contrast are evident in Argento's settings of *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*. The versicular songs in the former stand out against the through-composed songs in the latter. In addition, the customary phrasing in the early cycle differs from the irregular phrases in the later cycle. Argento's use of word stress also differentiates the two cycles from one another. In *Songs about Spring*, the words form melodic phrases, as opposed to the speech-like syntax of the declamatory phrases in *Miss Manners on Music*. Moreover, the inter-dependence of the voice and piano in *Songs about Spring* closely resembles traditional art song; while the independence of the voice and piano in *Miss Manners on Music* is similar to the structure of an orchestral reduction of an operatic composition. As a final point, Argento uses all of these elements to portray the text in markedly diverse ways in the two song cycles. Each song in *Songs about Spring* generates a feeling, sensation, or emotion. Each song in *Miss Manners on Music*, however, establishes characters and sets a stage. Although the text is musically reflected in both song cycles, Argento uses diverse musical styles to express sensations in the poetry as opposed to stories in the prose.

Songs about Spring did not come into its final form until ten years after its premiere—appearing first as only three songs, then as five, then finally with orchestral accompaniment. Even so, this was indicative of a composer experimenting with a new genre as well as of Argento's rethinking and refining his initial foray into the, at first for him, unnecessary field of vocal music. *Miss Manners on Music* was written as a whole with the composer's full attention and, after some initial misgivings, intention. It is interesting to note that both cycles were suggested, even forced upon him, by outsiders—the first by his composition teacher to urge Argento into the as yet, for him, unexplored arena of vocal music, and the second by the husband of the subject, literally, of the cycle. Yet, they remain examples of his work on par with any other song cycles, which were the fruits of his own inspiration and desire to create.

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Appendix A: Songs about Spring

e.e.cummings

i.

who knows if the moon's
a balloon, coming out of a keen city
in the sky—filled with pretty people?
(and if you and i should
get into it, if they
should take me and take you into their balloon,
why then
we'd go up higher with all the pretty people
than houses and steeples and clouds;
go sailing
away and away sailing into a keen
city which nobody's ever visited, where
always
 it's
 Spring)and everyone's
in love and flowers pick themselves

ii.

Spring is like a perhaps hand
(which comes carefully
out of Nowhere)arranging
a window,into which people look(while
people stare
arranging and changing placing
carefully there a strange
thing and a known thing here)and
changing everything carefully
spring is like a perhaps
Hand in a window
(carefully to
and fro moving New and
Old things,while
people stare carefully
moving a perhaps
fraction of flower here placing
an inch of air there)and
without breaking anything.

iii.

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
lucious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and
the
goat-footed

balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

iv.

in

Spring comes(no-
one
asks his name)

a mender
of things

with eager
fingers(with
patient
eyes)re

-new-

ing remaking what
other
-wise we should
have
thrown a-

way(and whose

brook
-bright flower-
soft bird
-quick voice loves

children
and sunlight and

mountains)in april(but
if he should
Smile)comes

nobody'll know

v.

when faces called flowers float out of the ground
and breathing is wishing and wishing is having—
but keeping is downward and doubting and never
—it's april(yes,april;my darling)it's spring!
yes the pretty birds frolic as spry as can fly
yes the little fish gambol as glad as can be
(yes the mountains are dancing together)

when every leaf opens without any sound
and wishing is having and having is giving—
but keeping is doting and nothing and nonsense
—alive;we're alive,dear;it's(kiss me now)spring!
now the pretty birds hover so she and so he
now the little fish quiver so you and so i
(now the mountains are dancing,the mountains)

when more than was lost has been found has been found
and having is giving and giving is living—
but keeping is darkness and winter and cringing
—it's spring(all our night becomes day)o, it's spring!
all the pretty birds dive to the heart of the sky
all the little fish climb through the mind of the sea
(all the mountains are dancing;are dancing)

Appendix B: Miss Manners on Music

Judith Martin

I. Prologue

The adage that Silence is Golden has never been more true, in Miss Manners' opinion. Its value is rising astonishingly every day and it is getting correspondingly harder for most people to have any. By silence, Miss Manners means something you can hear a bird tweet in. ...individuals and industries have combined to produce a constant stream of nasty noise masquerading everywhere under the inappropriate name of music. Restaurants, hotel lobbies and shops are wired for sound. Hand carried radios take care of the streets and buses. In private houses... the fancy sound of mild classical music used as a "background." The fact is that all this noise is rude. It is rude to the captured audience of half-listeners, and what is more it is rude to the music. Music worth listening to is worth listening to.

II. Manners at a Concert

Shush! Dear Miss Manners: I believe in shushing people who talk during concerts. I didn't pay to hear them blabbering, blabbering, blabbering. Yet a friend who went with me told me I was being rude in telling people to shut up. It seems to me that what rudeness is, is talking during music.

Gentle Reader: Both are rude. The polite thing would be to say to the noisy person, "I beg your pardon, but I can't hear the music. I wonder if you would mind talking more softly?" By the time you have said all this, a third party will utter a loud shush, thereby accomplishing your purpose without sacrificing your manners.

III. Manners at the Ballet

Dear Miss Manners: when is it appropriate to clap at the ballet?

Gentle Reader: Serious minded people believe that clapping should be confined to the bows at the end of performances and detest any such manifestations while music is being played. By prevailing standards, however, applause is also customary at the ballet for any stage set more elaborate than one painted tree and an overgrown mushroom stool; at the appearance of a favorite dancer, and for any three leaps or four turns.

IV. Manners for Contemporary Music

Dear Miss Manners: I attend the symphony regularly, and I am getting tired of hearing new compositions which do nothing for me except grate on my nerves like a

piece of chalk scraped across a blackboard. Is it polite to boo such a piece? I've read that they used to tear up the seats in Paris theaters. Why should the United States be so polite and suffer in silence?

Gentle Reader: Miss Manners is not against the proper expression of displeasure, as well as pleasure, at musical events. Although too timid herself to boo, she does not recognize the need to thank performing artists for their efforts and therefore interprets applause as a show of approval for the success of those efforts; where there is room for approval, there must also be room for disapproval. If you boo a piece at its premiere, the disapproval is assumed to be for the composer, and it is those occasions where people had such high old times in Paris and elsewhere. However tearing up seats in the auditorium as a sign of aesthetic disapproval usually turned out to have been an historical error, marking one for future generations as a major philistine scorning composers who later turned out to be regarded as immortals. If you boo at a later performance, your comment is taken as critical of the performers.

V. Manners at a Church Recital

Dear Miss Manners: I recently attended a vocal recital with Malcolm, a friend from my church choir. During one particular rendition, Malcolm jabbed me in the side and whispered "Are you aware that you are moving your head in time to the music?" I stopped immediately but felt irritated that he would tell me how to behave. Since then, Malcolm has mentioned at least four times that I so embarrassed him by my "ignorant behavior" that he wanted to crawl underneath the pew! I do concede that a church recital is fairly formal. I am in my fifties and have attended many recitals and stage plays. Malcolm made me feel like a country bumpkin. Did I behave inappropriately? Don't mince words, Miss Manners—give it to me straight!

Gentle Reader: Too bad Malcolm didn't crawl under the pew. He would be better off out of sight because he committed three serious breaches of etiquette during the recital (whispering, correcting, and jabbing) and, by your count, four afterward. Nodding the head slightly is, Miss Manners assures you, nothing whatsoever in comparison. As an annoyance, it is in a category with small-gestured conducting on one's own lap—which puts it way below foot tapping and snoring. Concert manners vary not only according to the program and hall, but by country and century. At choice Italian opera houses, failing to deliver a mid-aria critique to the singer is considered to show a lamentable lack of interest. So while it is true that a trance-like state, eyes blank and lips slightly curved in the idiot position, is the safest stance to take, there is no rule applicable to all occasions. Except that Malcolm is not the person with whom to enjoy music.

VI. Manners at the Opera

Dear Miss Manners: I am terribly upset about some people's deplorable conduct at the conclusion of a recent opera. Barely had the final curtain touched the stage, the opera stars not yet gone forward to take their bows, and throngs of what I consider extremely rude patrons started a fast exit up the aisles, supposedly to beat the crowds to the doors, parking lots, or after-theater suppers. My being able to rise and applaud the players on stage is as much a part of an enjoyable evening at the opera as the actual performance, but when six people push their way past me to make their exits and a near platoon is enroute from the front rows, I am personally angered. And goodness knows what the performers must think seeing a sea of backs. I cannot believe that this is proper conduct, but I am at a loss on how either to halt the exodus or to appease my anger. Would you please help?

Gentle Reader: Well, actually, no. In fact, as a violent opera lover herself, Miss Manners (who just loves violent operas) endorses the lively school of audience reaction, rather than the genteel one that you represent. Uniformly respectful applause is the result of ritualizing the experience of attending an opera to the point that no real expression of opinion is permitted. If Miss Manners were an opera singer (and she has all the qualifications but voice) she would prefer the occasional excesses of enthusiasm when ecstatic fans pulled her carriage through the streets (even if it also means occasional obviously misguided disapproval) she would prefer that to hearing the same tepid politeness for her triumphs and her failures.

VII. Envoi

Dear Miss Manners: Who says there is a 'right' way of doing things and a wrong?

Gentle Reader: Miss Manners does. You want to make something of it?

Appendix C: Song Cycles of Dominick Argento⁶⁸

Title	Date	Poetry	Prose	Author(s)
<i>Songs about Spring</i>	1954	X		e.e.cummings
<i>Six Elizabethan Songs</i>	1958	X		Shakespeare & various poets
<i>Letters from Composers</i>	1968		X	Chopin, Mozart, Schubert, Bach, Debussy, Puccini, and Schumann (letters)
<i>To Be Sung upon the Water</i>	1972	X		William Wordsworth
<i>From the Diary of Virginia Woolf</i>	1974		X	Virginia Woolf (diaries)
<i>The Andrée Expedition</i>	1982		X	Two Swedish explorers (journals)
<i>Casa Guidi</i>	1983		X	Elizabeth Barrett Browning (letters)
<i>A Few Words about Chekhov</i>	1996		X	Olga Knipper (essay)
<i>Miss Manners on Music</i>	1998		X	Miss Manners a.k.a. Judith Martin, and her “Gentle Readers” (letters)
<i>Three Sonnets of Petrarch</i>	2008	X		Petrarch
<i>Three Meditations</i>	(TBA)	X		Walt Whitman, Walter De La Mare, Alun Lewis

⁶⁸ Qualls, 74.

Appendix D: E-mail Interview with Dominick Argento, June 2, 2009

1) Prose versus Poetry:

You have often chosen prose, specifically letters and journal entries, for song cycles.

a) Do you have a different compositional process for prose, as opposed to poetry?

A- None at all.

b) How do you feel the choice of prose versus poetry influences the musical style? What non-musical influence does prose have on your compositions, as opposed to the poetry?

A- Simply permits me to ignore poem's meter.

c) I found that the poetic text and your musical setting of the *Songs about Spring* invoked feelings about my relationship to the music and text (for example "who knows if the moon's a balloon" made me feel the drifting, floating qualities of the balloon). In contrast, the prose text in *Miss Manners on Music* and the way you set it evoke more of the sense of being at each performance, with the singer and accompanist depicting roles for and creating the atmosphere of the various musical venues (for example, the singer in "Manners at the Ballet" depicting both Gentle Reader and Miss Manners while the accompanist seems to depict first the orchestra, then the audience). Is this difference in treatments of styles of text - poetry versus prose – a personal choice on your part or is it an unconscious consequence of the influence of the text?

A- Actually, both.

d) Do you find it easier to write music to suit prose or poetry, or does it make a difference? I have read that you feel that you have more compositional freedom with prose. What compositional obstacles do you not encounter when setting prose as opposed to poetry?

A- Prose is easier for me. Prose is invariable clearer than poetry, thus easier to understand when sung.

e) Do you feel that you tend to be drawn to letters and diaries because of your "self-discovery" theme, or because they lend themselves more easily to your compositional techniques, or both?

A- Both.

f) In what ways does non-fictional prose give you more compositional freedom than fictional prose? Do you feel that it focuses your compositional direction or do you ever find it restrictive? If yes, how so?

A- I find no difference between setting fiction and non-fiction.

g) My favorite song from *Songs about Spring* is “iv. in spring comes” because it is both emotionally internal and musically exposed for the singer. In my view, the minimal accompaniment, which echoes the vocal line exactly, is the perfect complement to the text. Which of the five songs do you feel best represents the poetry? Why?

A- #5 (When faces..) It just seemed that a giddy waltz well suited the cartoon-like flavor of the poem.

h) Even though *Songs about Spring* is a song cycle, each song could stand alone, while the songs in *Miss Manners on Music* have more of a connection with each other—each song seems like a movement of a larger work—and make more sense when performed as a set. Notwithstanding your later cycle *To Be Sung Upon the Water*, would it be fair to say that most of the songs in your early poetry settings seem to be more individualistic in their compositional style, while the prose settings are more connected as song cycles—both textually and musically? If so, what is it about prose that lends itself to this stronger connection between songs within a cycle?

A- My earliest ‘cycles’ (*Songs About Spring* and the six Eliz. Songs) are not really cycles as I later understood the term. They are simply sets of songs sharing a common theme. Later on I preferred ‘cycle’s that, in effect, told a story or portrayed a character.

i) Your very first vocal compositions (unpublished songs—composed during your sophomore and junior years at Peabody) were settings of poetry in small groups: two Emily Dickinson settings, and three Walt Whitman settings.

1) Could each of these songs stand alone, or would they need to be performed together? Are they set in traditional art song form—versicular in nature?

A- I suppose they could stand alone except they were too weak to stand. Being Dickinson and Whitman poems, they resisted the customary song forms.

2)) Do you still have these songs? If so, would you be willing to let me see them for comparative purposes?

A- No. I don't even think I could find them.

3) What observations can you provide on the relationship between the text and music in these unpublished pieces?

A- Frankly, I scarcely remember them and any relationship between the text and musical would have been accidental.

4) Why didn't you publish these pieces? Is there any chance they will be published in the future?

A- They don't represent me. No.

2) Compositional Development:

a) In what way(s) do you think *Songs about Spring* contributed to your later vocal compositional style and your development as a vocal composer?

A- I don't feel they contributed much of anything and I'm always surprised at how different they are from my later vocal music.

b) Your text selection process has changed dramatically since the first cycle was written. How has your approach to composition evolved over the years, especially for vocal music?

A- I'd say they evolved together, symbiotically.

c) How has the fact that you gravitated toward prose (usually letters or journal entries) for your more mature works affected your style?

A- It allowed me to be more eclectic and choose from different idioms suitable to the text rather than trying to achieve a unified 'style.

d) Since the last five of your nine song cycles have used prose, have you deliberately decided not to use poetry in this genre? If so, why?

A- No, my most recent cycle (Three Petrarch Sonnets) is not prose although I used my own translations which permitted me to take some liberties.

e) Your later song cycles seem to have more musical form as a whole cycle, in addition to orchestral-like piano accompaniments and more independent vocal lines. Is this due to the choice of text (prose versus poetry), or is it your more mature compositional style, or both?

A- I think it is simply a matter of maturity and wanting to avoid repetition.

f) What elements of your later compositional style are present in *Miss Manners on Music*?

A- I never think of my music in terms of compositional 'style.' I just write the music I feel is needed to achieve the result I want the piece to have.

g) How has your operatic compositional style influenced your other vocal works?

A- Yes. My best songs are – to my mind – operatic.

3) *Songs about Spring*:

a) Your text selection for *Songs about Spring* was made in haste, to meet an academic deadline. Do you now feel that the choice of text was right?

A- It isn't a question of 'right.' Anything by e.e.cummings dealing with spring would have been acceptable. My main [sic] interest in selecting them was to find interesting variety.

b) You have said that you did not choose the poems with the same discriminating process that you use now; but still, you chose these specific poems out of a book of poetry. What drew you to these instead of some of the other poems? Which poem first piqued your interest? What was there one element of the poem that really struck you as important and something that you would want to set to text? How did you seek to support that text musically?

A- You do understand that that cycle is well over half-a-century old. I'm lucky (at age 81) to even remember the title. As for the questions you ask, I have no memory.

c) Were you already familiar with e.e.cummings poetry when you chose the poems? What other poets did you consider?

A- I had heard cummings read his poems at Johns Hopkins when I was a student at Peabody and enjoyed them and his reading of them

d) Did you consider prose at that time? If so, what drew you to poetry instead of prose?

A- No, In those days, I assumed songs required a poetic text.

e) How rapidly did you compose the first three songs?

A- As I recall, the first three were written in the summer (6 weeks) of 1950 at Cummington, Massachusetts.

f) Was the text selection process for the final two songs (several years later) more discriminating than it was for the first three?

A- Yes. By then I had married a soprano and learned a bit more about writing for the voice and wanted her to have a full group for her recitals.

g) When you later added the final selections to the cycle, was that a confirmation to yourself that the original choice of poetry met your criteria for text?

A- It never occurred to me to think of it that way.

h) Was the compositional process easier or more difficult for the last two songs in the set?

A- Yes. and I was able to consult my wife about various things.

i) Is it possible that, regardless of the hast in which you selected the poetry, *Songs about Spring* may fit into your theme of “Self-knowledge” or “self discovery,” in an unconscious way? Why or why not?

A- I certainly never entertained that idea. In a sense, it has little to do with my later stuff.

j) I have read that you state that *Songs about Spring* can be performed from the perspective of a child. In addition, the theme of “spring” is all about new life and new beginnings. Being your first song cycle, it is fitting that you chose the “spring” theme at the beginning of you compositional career. What are your thoughts on this as evidence that this work fits into your “self-discovery” theme?

A- Sounds like sophistry to me, but of course that’s how analysts and critics make their living.

4) *Miss Manners on Music*:

A- When describing your search for the right columns to use in *Miss Manners on Music*, you said, “As is always the case, once the text was right, composition went rapidly.”

a) Which column first piqued your interest? What about that column appealed to you? How did you seek to support that text musically?

A- I have no idea. The breakthrough was finding the theme (her columns dealing with music).

b) How long did it take you to compose all seven songs?

A- Two to three months.

c) What were the biggest challenges in creating music that reflected the text?

A- Finding enough contrast and trying to avoid overdoing the wittiness.

d) Which of the songs in *Miss Manners on Music* do you feel best suits the text? Why?

A- At the Opera. Because it afforded a chance to get off a Pucciniesque parody.

e) Do you feel that *Miss Manners on Music* fits into your “self-discovery” theme? Why or why not?

A- No. Everything I do doesn’t necessarily fit that idea. Besides, I think of it mainly in connection with my operas, less so with the song cycles.

f) How does this song cycle differ from the immediately preceding four cycles set to prose? What elements are similar?

A- Primarily because the author of the text I was setting was alive and aware of what I was doing and, in general, I don’t often attempt to write amusing music. Comedy, yes. Amusing, rarely.

g) Did you try to differentiate musically between the two characters: Gentle Reader, and Miss Manners? Should the singer assume two different characters in each song? Should each Gentle Reader be an individual character?

A- Yes, I meant to differentiate between the two, questioner and answerer. Questioner

is different in each song but the answerer is always Miss Manners and remains the same.

h) If you consider *Miss Manners* to be your latest song cycle, why have you chosen not to write additional song cycles?

A- It is not the latest or last. I already mention the Three Sonnets of Petrarch (for baritone and piano) and Three Meditations (for unaccompanied soprano). The Sonnets are already published. The Meditations are in press at the moment.

5) The Compositional Process:

a) How do you begin the compositional process when composing song? Do you have a typical process? How has the process evolved over your compositional career?

A- I can only give you Britten's own answer. I start with a note and the rest naturally follows. I know that's no help but it's the best I can do.

b) In what ways does the text dictate your compositional style?

A- It determines everything: tempo, pacing, color, harmonic idiom, rhythm, etc.

c) How do you use a methodical compositional device such as a tone row to reflect text? Is this method easier to apply to prose than poetry?

A- Use or non-use of a tone row has nothing to do with the text.

d) Are the vocal lines written first, does the accompaniment come first, or are both parts written together?

A- Generally the line comes first since that is shaped by the text [sic] itself but it is often already emmeshed with an idea *pr tje* [sic] accompaniment.

e) What compositional methods/devices were used in the composition of *Songs about Spring* and *Miss Manners on Music*?

A- I never think that I'm composing with any particular method or device in mind. I'm using the same 'method' that Mozart or Verdi used, whatever that was. I think of it as 'writing music.'

f) Did you use any twelve-tone techniques in *Songs about Spring*? If so, which songs employ the compositional device?

A- No. I didn't even know what a row was in those days.

g) Did you use twelve-tone techniques in your other song cycles set to poetry, *Six Elizabethan Songs* and *To Be Sung upon the Water*? Why or why not?

A- Not in the Eliz. Songs. Only partially in *To Be Sung*. Sometimes it's helpful. sometimes it's not.

h) Did you use any twelve-tone techniques in *Miss Manners on Music*? If so, which songs employ the compositional device?

A- I don't remember if I did or not but I don't think so.

Follow-up Questions:

1) Regarding 2) d:

When I ordered Three Sonnets of Petrarch from the music store, I read that it tells the story of the "beginning, middle and end of the poet's unrequited love for a married woman."

a) Can you elaborate on the story told through the poetry, and what about it compelled you to set it to music?

A- Nothing to tell. P. loved an aristocratic married woman and wrote scores of sonnets about his unrequited love for her. I chose a sonnet about his early contact with her, another much later on about his abiding and inextinguishable infatuation with her, and another about his grief after her death. The sonnets have resonance in my own personal life.

b) You said using your own translations allowed you to take some liberties. How so?

A- If I needed two syllables where a one syllable word occurred I could change if I wished to a 2 syllable synonym, and v.v..

d) Did you, as you often do, have a specific singer in mind when you wrote them? If so, who?

A- No. It was a gift to a friend.

2) Regarding 4) h:

You mentioned a new cycle for soprano, Three Meditations, that is currently in press.

a) Are these songs set to poetry or prose?

A- Short poems.

b) Who is the lyricist?

A- What Whitman, Walter De La Mare, Alun Lewis

c) Why are they unaccompanied?

A- That's the way the singer wanted them.

d) Can you tell me anything about the subject matter--about the story or character?

A- These are simply short poems, more mood than story or character. I think Boosey will sell you a pre-publication. Someone else writing about me managed to buy a copy.

e) Did you have a specific singer in mind when you wrote them? If so, who?

A- Yes. Marie Jette.

f) Is there a publication date as of yet?

A- No one has told me.

3) Regarding 2) g:

You said, "My best song cycles are - to my mind - operatic."

a) Which song cycles do you consider to be your best, and why?

A- Virginia Woolf. Casa Guidi. Andree. They explore characters in a significant phase of their lives which is what the best operas do, from Orfeo to Death in Venice.

b) From your perspective, what makes them operatic?

A- See the answer above.

4) Regarding 1) c and h:

Would it be fair to say the differences in your settings of poetry and prose (Songs about Spring invoking feelings, as opposed to Miss Manners on Music creating characters) are attributed to your earlier versus later understanding of song cycles, and that your text selection is a reflection of that understanding? Why or why not?

A- What I gradually came to realize is that a group or collection of songs is not always a cycle. Eg., "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" is definitely not a cycle and one can sing a few of the songs, all of them, rearrange them etc., and little harm is done. In short, they are not organic. With works I call cycles, not to do them exactly as the composer wished changes them.

Appendix E: Copyright Permission Letter



August 12, 2009

Rebecca Salter
3305 Buckingham Place
Yukon, OK 73099

RE: SONGS ABOUT SPRING by Dominick Argento and E.E. Cummings
MISS MANNERS ON MUSIC by Dominick Argento and Judith Martin

Dear Ms. Salter:

We hereby grant permission for you to include excerpts from the above referenced works in your dissertation for the University of Oklahoma. As we assume you will not distribute your paper beyond that which is required for the degree no fee is payable.

We do require that you include the following copyright notice and credit line immediately following the music examples:

SONGS ABOUT SPRING by Dominick Argento and E.E. Cummings
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Permission is also granted for you to deposit one copy of your paper with University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan for single reproductions for scholarly use only. Should you wish to place your paper elsewhere you will have to contact us in advance as a royalty may be payable.

With kind regards,

BOOSEY & HAWKES, INC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bindiya Patel".

Bindiya Patel
Copyright Administrator

Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.
35 East 21st Street, New York, NY 10010-6212
Telephone (212) 358-5300 / Fax (212) 358-5305

Appendix F: Human Subjects Approval



The University of Oklahoma
OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 12190
Amendment Approval Date: May 26, 2009

May 28, 2009

Rebecca Ann Salter
Dept. of Music
3305 Buckingham Place
Yukon, OK 73099

RE: IRB No. 12190: "Songs About Spring" and other Argento Song: From a Singer's Perspective

Dear Ms. Salter:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed your protocol modification form. It is my judgement that this modification allows for the rights and welfare of the research subjects to be respected. Further, it has been determined that the study will continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the potential benefits to subjects and others warrant the risks subjects may choose to incur.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described in:

Amend Form Dated: May 26, 2009

Survey Instrument Dated: May 26, 2009 Additional Interview Questions

Amendment Summary:

1) New interview questions added.

This letter covers only the approval of the above referenced modification. All other conditions, including the original expiration date, from the approval granted August 04, 2008 are still effective.

If consent form revisions are a part of this modification, you will be provided with a new stamped copy of your consent form. Please use this stamped copy for all future consent documentation. Please discontinue use of all outdated versions of this consent form.

If you have any questions about these procedures or need additional assistance, please do not hesitate to call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Laurette Taylor".
E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Ltr_Amend_Final_Appv_Exp

660 Parrington Oval, Suite 316, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-3085 PHONE: (405) 325-8110 FAX: (405) 325-2373





The University of Oklahoma
OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 12190
Approval Date: August 04, 2008

August 05, 2008

Rebecca Ann Salter
Dept. of Music
3305 Buckingham Place
Yukon, OK 73099

RE: "Songs About Spring" and other Argento Song: From a Singer's Perspective

Dear Ms. Salter:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 6, 7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Other Dated: August 04, 2008 Recruitment Email - Revised
Consent form - Subject Dated: August 04, 2008 Revised
Consent form - Other Dated: August 04, 2008 Information Sheet - Revised
Protocol Dated: August 04, 2008 Revised
IRB Application Dated: August 04, 2008 Revised
Survey Instrument Dated: July 30, 2008 Revised - Interview questions

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on August 03, 2009. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,


E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

660 Parrington Oval, Suite 316, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-3085 PHONE: (405) 325-8110 FAX: (405) 325-2373

Ltr_Proc_Fappv_Exp

