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ARTHUR SOMERVELL'S *A SHROPSHIRE LAD*: PEDAGOGY FOR THE DEVELOPING BARITONE VOICE AND EXPANDING THE ENGLISH ART SONG CANON

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By MATTHEW MCKINNON

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ARTHUR SOMERVELL'S *A SHROPSHIRE LAD*: PEDAGOGY FOR THE DEVELOPING BARITONE VOICE AND EXPANDING THE ENGLISH ART SONG CANON

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Joel Burcham, Chair

Dr. Jonathan Shames, Co-Chair

Dr. Nathan Dougherty

Dr. Harold Mortimer

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Abstract

This document serves as a pedagogical guide to Arthur Somervell's song cycle *A Shropshire Lad* (1904) for the developing baritone voice. Additionally, it positions Arthur Somervell as a historically significant composer and his song cycle *A Shropshire Lad* as a pedagogically beneficial composition. The cycle also serves as a fine example of an underrepresented work in an underutilized English art song canon. To contextualize this need, repertoire data from NATS resources and recital programs at various universities and conservatories are included. This data demonstrates that the English art song canon for baritone voices remains underutilized and repetitive, with a strong emphasis and overreliance on composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, and Roger Quilter.

This pedagogical guide is based on criteria commonly employed in studio teaching and performance evaluation, such as tone, breath management, diction, musicality, and artistry, and is aligned with the NATS classical audition rubric. Furthermore, the study introduces a repertoire substitution plan that pairs selected songs from *A Shropshire Lad* with frequently performed English art songs, matching them by technical and musical characteristics. This document ultimately contributes to ongoing efforts to diversify art song study by identifying Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* as a "hidden gem" with demonstrable pedagogical value for developing baritones.

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Introduction

It was not until the end of my first year of undergraduate music study, while listening to Welsh bass baritone Bryn Terfel's album of English art song *Silent Noon* with pianist Malcolm Martineau, that I first heard Arthur Somervell's song cycle *A Shropshire Lad* (1904). The album's collection of art songs by early twentieth-century English composers featured familiar names like Ralph Vaughan Williams, Roger Quilter, and Ivor Gurney, but also introduced me to less familiar composers such as Frederic Keel, Hubert Parry, Charles Villiers Stanford, Peter Warlock, and Arthur Somervell. However, of all the songs on the album, it was Somervell's cycle *A Shropshire Lad* that resonated with me the most and inspired me to bring the pieces to my voice professor.

To my surprise, my professor, who had taught at the university for more than fifty years, was unfamiliar with Somervell, though he recognized A. E. Housman's poetry. After I had played the songs for him, he agreed to let me learn several of them and eventually began assigning Somervell to other students as well. Ultimately, I sang only a few of the songs during my undergraduate years but returned to the work during my DMA, pairing the entire cycle with Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel* (1904). Those performances confirmed my sense that *A Shropshire Lad* is both musically well-crafted and exceptionally well-suited to the baritone voice, yet unfamiliar to many singers, teachers, and coaches in my circles.

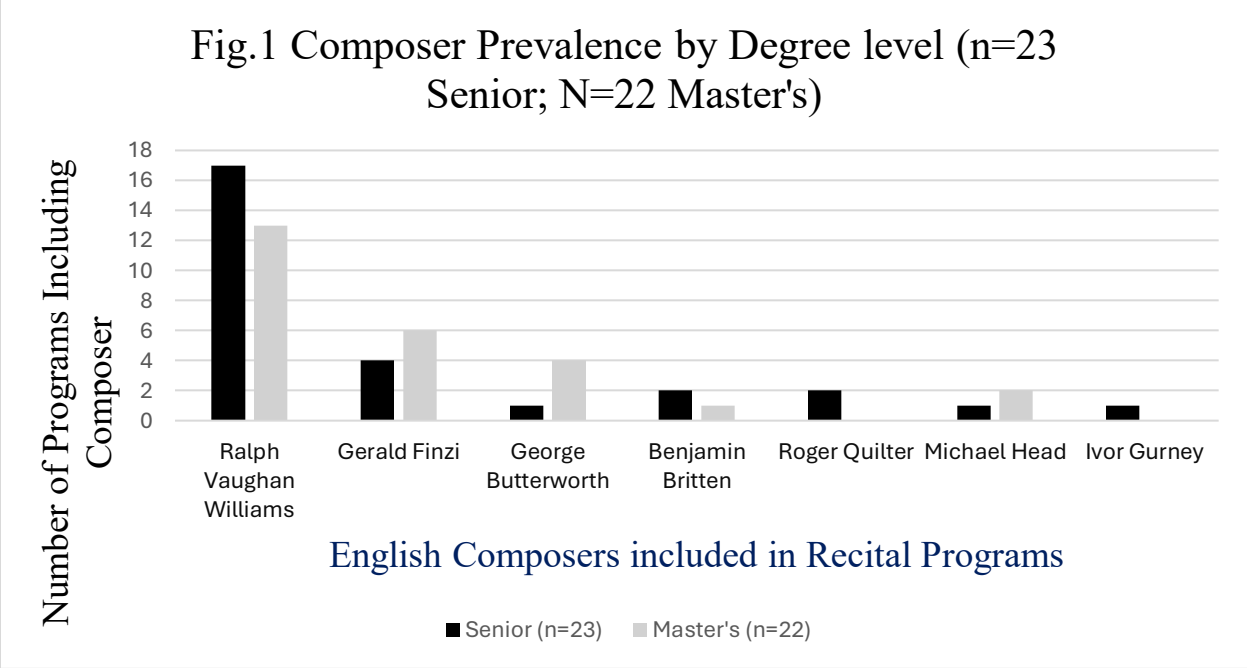
Expanding the Canon

In realizing that Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* was unfamiliar to my colleagues and professors, I became curious about the state of the English art song canon and what was being performed across the United States (in this document, English art song refers to art songs by English composers). This curiosity was also influenced by personal experience attending many juries, recitals, and competitions, in which there seemed to be a very limited repertoire of English art song. When I heard English art song performed by fellow baritones, it seemed to consist only of Vaughan. Williams, Roger Quilter, or, occasionally, Gerald Finzi. To confirm that this personal experience was not an outlier, I set out to research recent baritone undergraduate and master's recital programs across the country to see which English art songs were most frequently performed.

In reviewing recital programs drawn from online institutional archives at the University of North Texas, the University of Oklahoma, Northwestern's Bienen School of Music, the Peabody Institute, Manhattan School of Music, and San Francisco Conservatory, I discovered that my suspicions were correct and that repertoire choices repeatedly clustered around a small and predictable group of composers.[1] The survey of forty-five recent baritone and bass-baritone recitals that included English art song (twenty-three senior and twenty-two master's recitals) revealed Ralph Vaughan Williams on thirty programs, (most often *Songs of Travel*), Gerald Finzi on ten (primarily *Let Us Garlands Bring*), Butterworth on six (*A Shropshire*

[1] University of North Texas Libraries, "UNT Digital Library," accessed November 2, 2025, https://digital.library.unt.edu; University of Oklahoma Libraries, "Fine Arts Library," accessed November 2, 2025, https://libraries.ou.edu/locations/fine-arts-library; Peabody Institute, Arthur Friedheim Library, "Digital Collections of the Arthur Friedheim Library," accessed November 2, 2025, https://peabody.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16613coll31/search; Northwestern University, Bienen School of Music, "Davee Media Library," accessed December 30, 2025, https://www.music.northwestern.edu/davee; Manhattan School of Music, "Livestreams," accessed December 30, 2025, https://www.msmnyc.edu/livestreams/?livestream_category=vocal-arts; San Francisco Conservatory of Music, "Performance Calendar," accessed December 30, 2025, https://sfcm.edu/experience/performance-calendar.

Lad), Britten on three, Michael Head on three, Quilter on two, and Ivor Gurney on one recital. One of the most significant data points to point out is that 42/45 (93%) of the recitals included either Finzi, Vaughan Williams, or Quilter, indicating that the vast majority of these recitals focus on only three composers within the entire English art song canon. Figure 1 below illustrates these findings.



To further grasp the scope of the English art song repertoire currently being performed, I conducted a second survey from the Texoma NATS repertoire database.[2] This extensive database captures all student entries from the regional competition from 2016 to 2022. The annual competition features undergraduate and graduate students from universities and private studios in the region and separates them into various categories based on years of study and vocal categories: TBB (Tenor, Baritone, Bass) and treble voices (Sopranos, Mezzo-soprano, etc.). The database collects thousands of song entries performed by these singers over this six-year period

[2] *Texoma NATS Repertoire Database*, Google Sheets, accessed November 2, 2025, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rn_FDmcTMG3L4U3dRUX6K_HLWrfVv_Suf0MwUiE-4E4/edit?gid=522126363#gid=522126363.

and provides unique insight into what college students are generally performing. The only drawback of this survey is that I was unable to further separate Baritones out of the TBB category. However, the survey remains valuable and provides further evidence of a generally narrow English art-song canon for male singers.

The data from my survey, in Figures 2 and 3, include the top entries across all TBB voices in undergraduate and graduate categories that were written or arranged by an English composer (768 total entries). The predominance of a small group of composers and a small set of "standard" selections reinforces my claim of a narrow English art song canon. This survey also supports the general concern within NATS about the redundancy of song repertoire performed in voice studios in the United States and provides empirical support for continued diversification efforts.[3]

Figure 2. Texoma NATS repertoire database (2016–2022): most frequently performed English art song composers.

Top composers (by count)

1. Quilter, Roger — 255
2. Vaughan Williams, Ralph — 209
3. Finzi, Gerald — 84
4. Head, Michael — 38
5. Britten, Benjamin (arr.) — 29
6. Warlock, Peter — 18
7. Gurney, Ivor — 17
8. Butterworth, George — 17
9. Ireland, John — 16
10. Britten, Benjamin — 11
11. All Others-74

[3] National Association of Teachers of Singing, "Advocacy Initiatives," accessed February 22, 2026, https://www.nats.org/Advocacy_Initiatives.html.

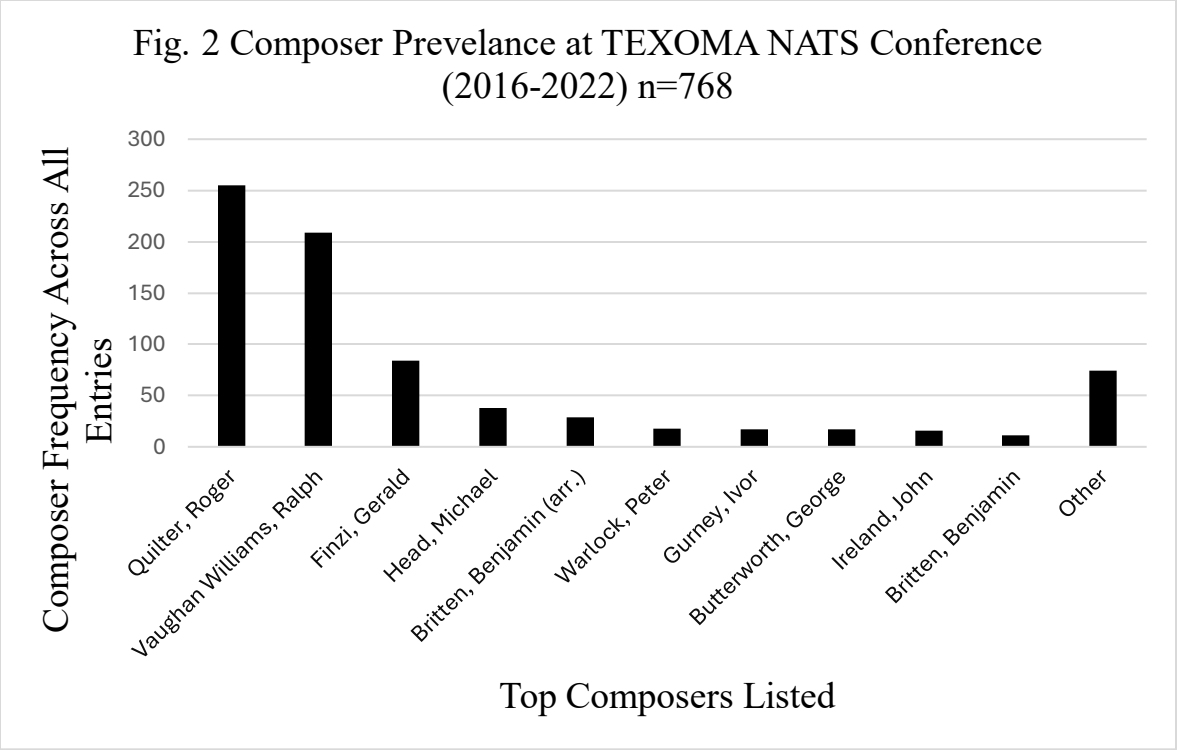
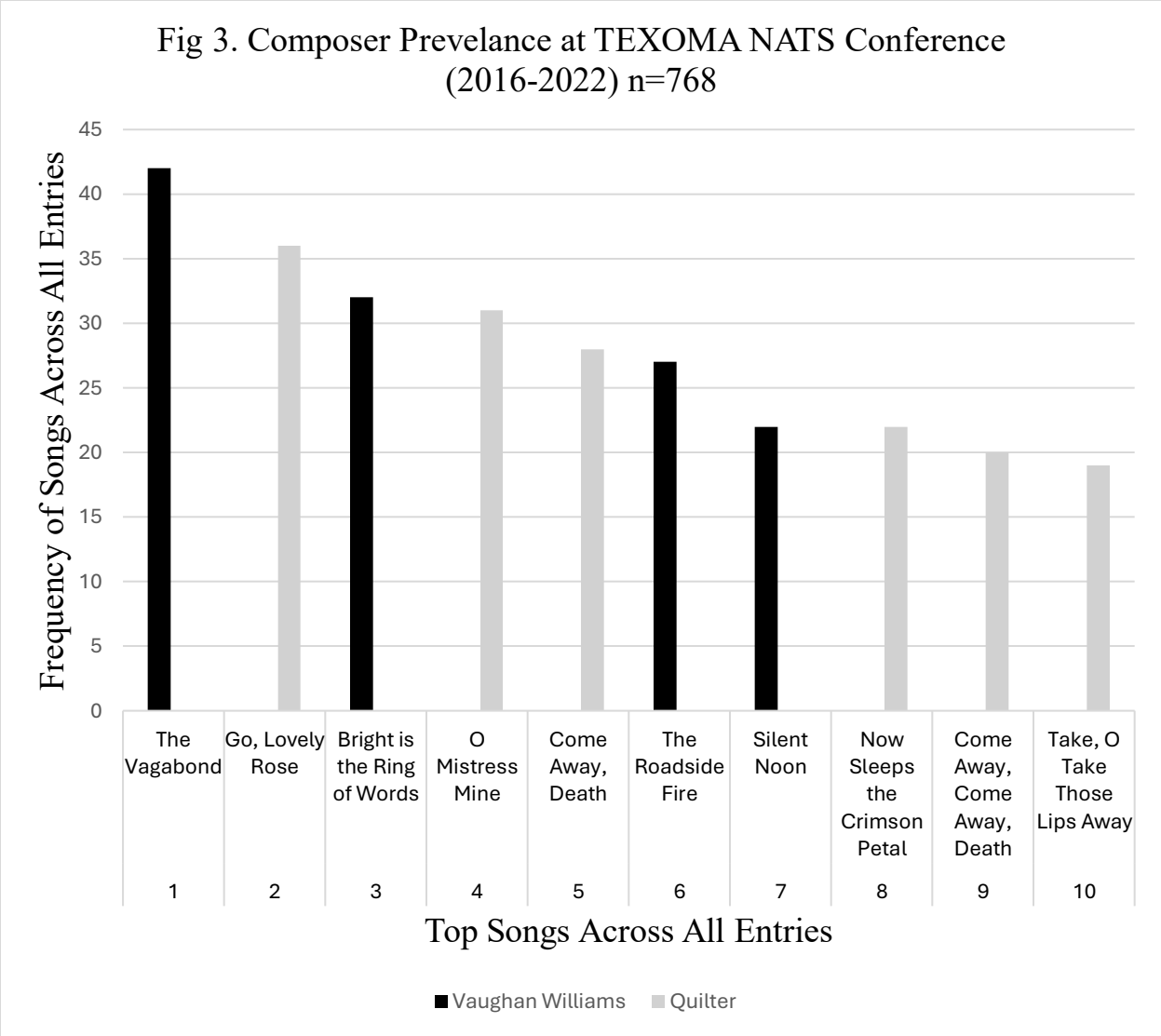


Figure 3. Texoma NATS repertoire database (2016–2022): most frequently performed English art song titles.

Top 10 songs (by frequency)

1. The Vagabond (Williams) — 42
2. Go, Lovely Rose (Quilter)— 36
3. Bright is the Ring of Words (Williams) — 32
4. O Mistress Mine (Quilter)— 31
5. Come Away, Come Away Death (Quilter) — 28
6. The Roadside Fire (Williams)— 27
7. Silent Noon (Williams)— 22
8. Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal (Quilter) — 22
9. Come Away, Come Away, Death Quilter) — 20
10. Take, O Take Those Lips Away (Quilter)— 19



The most significant takeaway here is that Vaughan Williams, Quilter, and Finzi account for approximately 71% of the English art song repertoire for male voices. Additionally, only two composers, Vaughan Williams and Quilter, are represented in the top 10 most-performed repertoire at the conference. This is not to say that English art song is underrepresented, as there are many entries in the competition, but it does indicate that when students sing English art songs, they tend to be by these three popular composers (Vaughan Williams, Quilter, and Finzi).

These two surveys combined show a significant issue within voice teaching practices. It demonstrates that, time and again, we rely on a narrow range of English song literature for young baritones and prescribe the same few repertoire choices again and again. This is unfortunate, as there are many other fine English art song composers, such as Somervell, that lie outside these commonly used works.

Within this context, Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* emerges as a compelling work. It, as I shall argue here, was written by a historically significant and underrepresented composer whose cycle, *A Shropshire Lad*, has genuine musical and pedagogical value for the developing baritone. Additionally, it also offers an alternative to the standard, perhaps overused, English art song repertoire.

Arthur Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* and the English Musical Renaissance

It is important here to highlight Somervell's brief background and significant achievements and contributions to English music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The historical background is included in this document because much of Somervell's work and achievements are not widely known. This is particularly true in the United States, where his music is performed infrequently, as discussed in the previous section. Here, I will briefly consider his role as a music educator and composer within the English Musical Renaissance, emphasizing his contributions to English song, including his most significant song cycles, *Maud and A Shropshire Lad.*

Arthur Somervell was born in Windermere, England, on June 5, 1863, and was the youngest of nine children. He showed a high level of musical ability at a young age and was sent to Uppingham School, one of the leading public schools of the period. After his time at Uppingham, he attended King's College, Cambridge, studying with Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), and was encouraged to further his training at the prestigious Berliner Hochschule für Musik in Germany from 1883 to 1885. In Berlin, he studied with Friedrich Kiel and Woldemar Bargiel (half-brother to Clara Schumann). After his time in Germany, Somervell returned to England in 1885 and studied briefly with Hubert Parry (1848-1918), who later appointed him to a teaching position at the Royal College of Music.[4]

Somervell's mentors, Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, were both highly influential English composers and teachers in the late nineteenth century. Both Stanford and Parry taught some of the most aspiring young English composers at the time, including Frank Bridge, John Ireland, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, to name a

[4] Gordon Cox, ed., *Sir Arthur Somervell on Music Education: His Writings, Speeches and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 10–12.

few.[5] Stanford and Parry's influence over England's best composers also helped them achieve their goal of creating a strong English tradition, aiming to create more high-quality English music comparable to that of Germany.

The success of the composers mentioned above, along with many others, led to a strong resurgence of English music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This resurgence would come to be known as the English Musical Renaissance, a term first used by the music critic Joseph Bennett in a review of Hubert Parry's Symphony no. 1 in G major (1882). In it, Bennett states that this symphony was "capital proof that English music has arrived at a renaissance period."[6] It was in this context that the "renaissance" term not only referred to the emergence of certain composers and their compositions, but also to a period of growth and renewed artistic seriousness within England. It was within this environment that Somervell's career as an educator and composer developed.

Somervell's major contributions to the English Musical Renaissance stem from his important and influential roles as a music educator and composer. As a music educator, he drew inspiration, in part, from his training under Parry and Stanford. As Gordon Cox notes,

> They were committed to the Schumann-Brahms tradition, the direction in which they believed English music had to move. Significantly for Somervell, a preoccupation for this inner group of reformers was the social utility of music, and the greatest field for utility was education, since it was there that the future of society would be decided.[7]

Somervell carried this inspiration into public service, and in 1901, he was named Inspector of Music for the Board of Education and the Scottish Education Department, a position he held for

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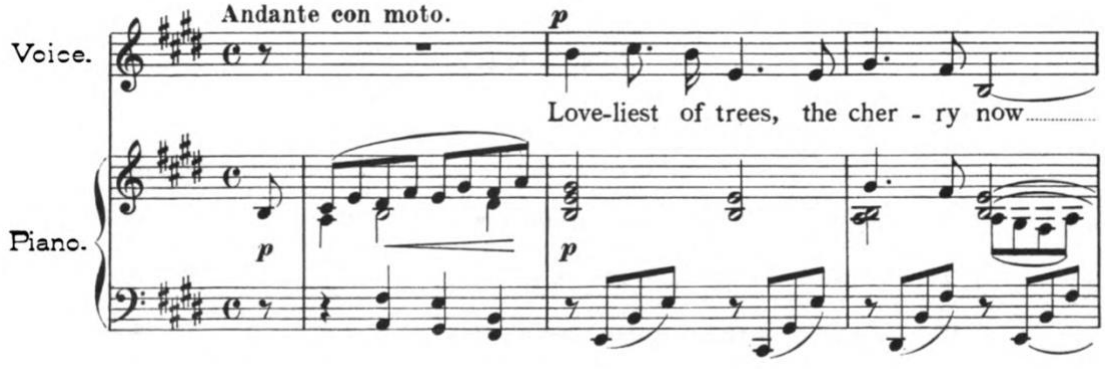
[5] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37–38, 42.
[6] Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press, 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 41.
[7] Gordon Cox, ed., *Sir Arthur Somervell on Music Education: His Writings, Speeches and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 12.

twenty-seven years. In this role, Somervell advanced several initiatives in English music education, including the incorporation of national songs into the school curriculum through Stanford's *The National Songbook* (1906). He also emphasized music literacy and published several widely used instructional materials, including *Fifty Steps in Sight Singing* (1904), *One Thousand Exercises* (1912), and *The Compleat Teacher* (1932).[8] His contributions in this capacity led to a greater emphasis on the arts and music in schools, ultimately culminating in his knighthood in 1929.[9]

Somervell's work overseeing music education in England surely limited his compositional output during this time, and it may be the main reason he is not as well represented in the English song canon. However, his position as an educator also gives Somervell a unique position among his contemporaries. His involvement with music schools and colleges in England, as well as his numerous composed vocal sight-reading exercises, lesson materials, and songs for children, likely influenced his compositional style. For instance, many of the songs in this cycle are highly sight-readable, a testament to his dedication to music literacy and the skills taught in his *Fifty Steps in Sight Singing,* published in the same year as his *A Shropshire Lad*. An example of the sight-readability of his music appears in the first song, "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now," where the opening diatonic melody could easily serve as a sight-reading exercise for young students (see Example 1).

[8] Ibid.,27.
[9] Ibid.,19.

Musical Example 1. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now," mm. 1-3
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



From a pedagogical perspective, he would have also been well acquainted with developing college-age voices, including baritones, which would have given him greater experience in writing for these voices. Additionally, Somervell had an obvious affinity for the baritone voice as 3 of his 5 cycles were written specifically for baritone (*Maud, A Shropshire Lad, and A Broken Arc*). This context makes his *A Shropshire Lad* even more appealing, as it is likely to have been influenced by Somervell's extensive educational and pedagogical experience.

In addition to his role as an educator, Somervell made significant contributions to English music as a composer, particularly in the song genre. Somervell's five song cycles and numerous individual songs were among his greatest achievements. Prior to Somervell, few English cycles had achieved public success and narrative cohesion comparable to the German cycles, such as Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. This is significant as the main goals of the English Musical Renaissance, orchestrated by Parry and Stanford, were to create more high-quality compositions comparable to the German tradition. According to writer Trevor Hold in his book *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers,* Arthur Sullivan attempted to create his English equivalent of the German song cycle earlier in 1870; however, it was largely considered unsuccessful because of the choice of poetry. Hold

claims that it wasn't until Somervell's *Maud* (1898) that the English achieved their own English equivalent of a true song cycle.[10] Therefore, Somervell was among the first English composers to compose England's first successful song cycle, which helped further elevate English music.

Somervell's 1898 setting of Alfred Tennyson's *Maud* condenses Tennyson's original poetry into 13 songs that still preserve the narrative of the larger work. Somervell's musical style in *Maud* is undoubtedly shaped by German influences, especially Schumann and Brahms.[11] This is partly attributable to Somervell's musical study in Germany, and it also aligns with the English Musical Renaissance's broader aim of emulating German musical models. Even so, Somervell's voice remains distinct, and *Maud* exemplifies his compositional style of expressive and clear tonal writing. Throughout *Maud*, Somervell shows a particular gift for shaping expressive vocal lines that closely reflect the poetry.[12] Although some critics fault his perhaps conservative idiom, that same restraint contributes to the music's accessibility, especially for young or less experienced singers.

Despite Somervell's conservative style, *Maud* is still highly regarded by scholars, with some even considering it a "minor masterpiece."[13] Trevor Hold, in his book *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers,* states:

> *Maud* was the first successful English song cycle and remains one of the masterpieces of English song. Somervell chose a poet and poems entirely suited to his genius, and his aristocratic, conservative musical style is a perfect match for Tennyson's poem. Singers love it, audiences love it, yet it suffers unaccountable neglect in the concert hall. If it had been written by a German composer, it would be a repertoire work. As it is, a live performance is a rare treat.[14]

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[10] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 89.
[11] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 52.
[12] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 101.
[13] Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), 159.
[14] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 91.

The piece was also significant in the evolution and increased sophistication of English song during this renaissance period, and writer Stephen Banfield labels it one of the five most important events in the development of English song.[15]

Banfield also points to the 1896 publication of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* as a major literary development that helped supply texts for innumerable song settings.[16] The popularity and sophistication of these texts helped further establish the English art song tradition; the first to officially set them to music was Arthur Somervell in 1904. In *A Shropshire Lad*, Somervell selects ten of Housman's sixty-three poems, creating his own unique narrative that retains Housman's themes of love, death, and the horrors of war. Within the cycle, he demonstrates his ability to craft clear yet expressive melodies that retain the essence of Housman's words with a similar compositional style as seen in his cycle *Maud*. *A Shropshire Lad* also features a compositional technique commonly associated with the German song-cycle tradition of using thematic cross-reference.[17] For instance, Somervell recalls the melody of the opening song, "Loveliest of Trees," in the ninth song, "Into My Heart an Air That Kills." In its return, the melody is transposed and presented at a slower tempo, helping to create a thematic thread that unites the entire cycle. This is similar to the way Robert Schumann in his song cycle *Dichterliebe* recalls material from No. 12. "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen" in his last song's postlude No. 16 "Die alten, bösen Lieder".

As with *Maud, A Shropshire Lad* was likewise met with public and critical praise. The premiere of *A Shropshire Lad* was very successful and drew high praise from the famous Irish

[15] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2.
[16] Ibid., 3.
[17] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 92.

baritone who premiered it, Harry Plunket Greene (1865-1936). A 1905 review from *The Musical Times* attests to its success:

> Dr. Arthur Somervell's new song-cycle 'A Shropshire Lad' was produced by Mr. Plunket Greene at his recital on February 3 at Æolian Hall. The Cycle comprises a series of songs which would seem to relate memorable incidents in the career of a lad who starts life in a village and ultimately becomes a soldier. We are inclined to think the music is amongst the best Dr. Somervell has written; at any rate, the work so pleased that Mr. Plunket Greene announces that he will repeat the Cycle on March 9 in the same hall.[18]

A selection of songs from Vaughan Williams *Songs of Travel* was also included on the program, and it has been speculated that Vaughan Williams may have been influenced by Somervell's Housman settings and inspired to create his own, which he did in his *On Wenlock Edge* (1909).[19]

In addition to *A Shropshire Lad,* his other three song cycles, including *A Broken Arc* (1923*)*, James *Lee's Wife* (1906, 1907), and *Love in Springtime* (1901), were also well received at the time but are rarely performed. Hold sums up the significance of Somervell and his song cycles in: "With *Maud*, *A Shropshire Lad*, and *A Broken Arc,* he achieved something his predecessors had not: a genuinely home-grown English song cycle, vocal music to match the scale and seriousness of the instrumental sonata, orchestral symphony, and choral oratorio." [20] Building on Somervell's historical significance and that of his song cycles, the following section will discuss the pedagogical value and appeal of his work for young developing baritones.

[18] "London Concerts," *The Musical Times* 46, no. 745 (1905): 188, http://www.jstor.org/stable/902671.
[19] Gordon Cox, ed., *Sir Arthur Somervell on Music Education: His Writings, Speeches and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003).
[20] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005).

Pedagogical benefits of Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad*

Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* is an especially strong choice for undergraduate singers as its narrative and themes closely reflect experiences that are often emotionally accessible to young singers. All ten songs are drawn from A. E. Housman's original 63 poems and are woven together into a unified dramatic arc that follows a young Shropshire lad, roughly in his early twenties. The cycle begins by introducing a young man in early adulthood in "Loveliest of Trees" and "When I Was One-and-Twenty," songs that immediately situate the protagonist at an age comparable to many undergraduate singers. The narrative then turns to romantic experience and ultimately heartbreak in "There Pass the Careless People," followed by the lover's death in "In Summertime on Bredon." The next few songs broaden the emotional and social scope of the cycle through military imagery and the horrors of war, particularly in "The Street Sounds to the Soldiers' Tread" and "On the Idle Hill of Summer." In "White in the Moon the Long Road Lies," the lad longs for home, while "Think No More, Lad" attempts to suppress grief through forced thoughtlessness. In the ninth song, "Into My Heart an Air That Kills," memory and nostalgia dominate, and in the final song, "The Lads in Their Hundreds," the protagonist is understood as just another young life lost to war.[21] This narrative progression gives undergraduate singers a compelling emotional journey to latch onto and supports growth in interpretation and communication.

Additionally, the text from A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) is one of the most iconic poetry collections in English literary history and one of the most frequently set, with notable musical settings by George Butterworth, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Ivor Gurney, John Ireland, W. Denis Browne, as well as by American composers such as John Duke, Samuel

[21] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 52-53.

Barber, and many others.[22] By learning Somervell's settings, singers become familiar with texts that recur across numerous other cycles and songs, especially widely used poems such as "Loveliest of Trees," "Bredon Hill," and "The Lads in Their Hundreds."

This cycle is also well-suited to developing baritones or bass-baritones in terms of vocal range. In nine of the ten songs, the vocal range falls approximately between C3 and E4, ideal for most young baritones and bass-baritones: the lower end is comfortably accessible, and the upper end sits at or just before the second *passaggio*. Navigating the *passaggio* is challenging for most singers during their undergraduate development, and it is often wise to limit the time spent in and above this critical zone while foundational technique is still forming.[23] *A Shropshire Lad* engages these areas without dwelling on them excessively, making the cycle an excellent training ground for developing consistency in the *passaggio* without overwhelming the student.

Somervell's work also features relatively straightforward tonal writing, which can benefit less experienced singers. Most of the songs are relatively diatonic, with limited use of more complex harmonic or modal language, which lowers the initial barrier to learning and allows students to focus on healthy vocal production and clear text. Additionally, the cycle supports an informal progression of difficulty, with a mix of songs spanning beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. This makes it ideal for college students who study voice for four years and is well-suited to be introduced gradually throughout an undergraduate degree. The complete cycle lasts just over twenty minutes, so it also fits comfortably on a senior or graduate recital while allowing room for repertoire in French, German, and Italian, which is often required.

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[22] Joseph T. Rawlins, "Housman, the Musicians' Poet," *The NATS Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (September/October 1980): 23–25.
[23] Richard Miller, *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

When a student studies the entire cycle rather than isolated songs, they experience the complete story the composer portrays and begin to notice how ideas, motives, and melodies recur. For example, in *A Shropshire Lad*, Somervell recalls the melodic material of the first song, "Loveliest of Trees," in the ninth song, "Into My Heart an Air That Kills," creating a clear musical and poetic link that invites deeper interpretation. This also illustrates to the student the artistic unity of the cycle and helps them become more familiar with Somervell's individual style and the poetry.

By learning all the songs in *A Shropshire Lad,* students also learn the essential skills baritones and singers in general must develop, including breath management, legato, resonance, diction, and expressive communication. The cycle can then become a lasting part of their repertoire, suitable for future recitals, concerts, and auditions, while also teaching stamina, pacing, and emotional trajectory over a longer span, skills that translate directly into work on more demanding cycles or even operatic roles. The technical skills acquired throughout this cycle are also much easier for American singers, as the genre is in a language they already speak.

As the U.S. is predominantly an English-speaking country, English art song removes the immediate obstacle of learning a foreign language while students are still developing vocal technique. Acclaimed vocal pedagogue Richard Miller, when discussing early repertoire suggestions, advocates English-language repertoire for American male singers for this reason.[24]

In practice, the English repertoire is also supported institutionally, as most universities and conservatories require English songs or arias in their curricula, audition requirements, syllabi, and jury/recital expectations. However, broader repertoire options within the English art

[24] Richard Miller, *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166. Amanda Lauricella, "Selecting Solo Literature for the Developing Classical Singer: A Pedagogical Repertoire Guide for Teachers of Voice" (D.M.A. written project, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2021).

song canon are clearly underused, as the data from the first section demonstrate. Moreover, while scholarship does address the pedagogical value of English art song for baritones and other voice types, it tends to focus on the same well-established composers already central to the canon.[25] This leaves little to no detailed discussion of the pedagogical benefits of composers or songs that lie outside this narrow canon, such as Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad*.

[25] Jeff MacMullen, "George Butterworth's A Shropshire Lad and Ralph Vaughan Williams's House of Life: A Pedagogical Guide for Baritone" (D.M.A. document, The Ohio State University, 2020).

Purpose of This Document

The remaining chapters will highlight the main purpose of this document, which is to provide a practical pedagogical guide to Arthur Somervell's song cycle *A Shropshire Lad* (1904) for the developing baritone voice. By focusing on this single cycle, the document demonstrates that *A Shropshire Lad* is historically, musically, and pedagogically valuable, and that it serves as a practical means of broadening the English art song repertoire available to students and teachers.

In addition to the pedagogical guide in the following chapter, this document proposes repertoire substitutions that pair selections from *A Shropshire Lad* with frequently assigned English art songs of comparable technical and musical profiles, offering teachers concrete alternatives when they wish to avoid redundant programming.

By producing a detailed, practically oriented pedagogical guide to *A Shropshire Lad* and offering substitution strategies tied to common repertoire, this document aims to furnish a practical resource for the voice studio and to highlight Somervell and his cycle as one representative example of the rich but underutilized English art song repertoire.

Chapter I: Pedagogical Guide for the Developing Baritone

This pedagogical guide provides individual song profiles for all ten songs of Arthur Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad.* Each profile provides essential information, including range, *tessitura*, key, tempo, difficulty considerations, and a brief rationale for the difficulty rating. All ten songs in Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* are examined individually using the 1904 Boosey edition as the primary musical source.[26] Additionally, a semester recommendation is given based on an undergraduate 4-year 8-semester degree plan. Along with this is a brief developmental goal based on the songs' content. The main portion of the guide will address each NATS standard discussed in the following paragraph, providing teaching points, potential challenges, and pathways for growth across these core categories.

To make this guide more accessible and practical to college teachers and students, each song profile incorporates the main vocal standards from the NATS classical audition rubric. This rubric is often used to evaluate students at NATS competitions as well as in university settings and includes the following categories: tone, breath management, text and diction, musicianship, artistry, and ensemble. The definitions from the rubric are as follows:[27]

> **Tone:** Resonance and timbre are appropriate to the style, with balanced chiaroscuro throughout range. Onset and offset are clean, clear and balanced allowing for vibrancy. Tuning is accurate throughout range. Dynamic flexibility is present; singer has the ability to make subtle changes appropriate to style and character.
>
> **Breathing/Alignment:** Inhalation is easy, full, and efficient. Exhalation provides stability, support, vibrancy, and vocal energy. Buoyant alignment assists a balanced engagement of the tone.

[26] Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).
[27] National Association of Teachers of Singing, *NATS Audition Rubric: 2023–24* (Jacksonville, FL: National Association of Teachers of Singing, 2023),
PDF, https://www.nats.org/_Library/2023_24_NSA_Docs/All_NSA_Rubrics_2023-24.pdf.

Language/Diction: Languages are sung with accurate pronunciation and effective articulation, with idiomatic inflection beyond basic phonetics. The singer displays a thorough understanding and communication of the text.

Musicianship: Pitches and rhythms are accurate. The markings of the composer, editor, or arranger are observed and presented with idiomatic style. Performance is easily sung from memory.

Artistry / Expression: The physical life, musicality, and vocalism of the singer fully express the music and story and engage the listeners in a fulfilling aesthetic experience.

Ensemble (comment only): The singer and pianist are well rehearsed and coordinate their efforts toward the same artistic goals in the performance.

The song profiles in this guide detail how to address each of these standards for all ten songs in the cycle. The pedagogical foundations for addressing each category (tone, breath, text/diction, musicianship, artistry, and ensemble) are based on my own teaching and singing experience, as well as on many core principles found in selected pedagogical resources.

Regarding the tone section of each song profile, many of the suggestions are based on the vowel modification principles found in Richard Miller's pedagogical texts, such as Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing,* and more specifically for baritones in his book *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices*.[28] These principles of vowel modification are vitally important for any singer singing classical repertoire to maintain a balanced, healthy tone. The specifics of these slight vowel modifications are described using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and are based specifically on what vowels generally suit baritone voices at certain pitch levels. Additionally, resources such as James C. McKinney's *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults* and G.B. Lamperti's *Vocal Wisdom* inform commentary on potential

[28] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986); Richard Miller, *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

pitfalls and challenges in maintaining healthy phonation and resonance throughout the vocal range.[29]

Each section on breathing will mostly consider the length of phrases in the score itself, but also the mechanics of breathing as they relate to the bel canto Italian tradition of intercostal-diaphragmatic breathing. The foundations of this type of breathing draw on several sources, including Giovanni Battista Lamperti's *The Technics of Bel Canto*, *Vocal Wisdom,* and Manuel García's *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Part One*.[30]

The text and diction sections are based on lyric diction principles found in Joan Wall's *Diction for Singers* and Madeleine Marshall's The *Singer's Manual of English Diction*.[31] These principles are specific to singers and consider not only the precise spoken pronunciation but also the vocal mechanism. This approach helps the singer to convey text effectively and clearly from a singing perspective. This section will largely use IPA to describe various consonant and vowel pronunciations.

The following section of the profile, "musicianship," refers to the ability to perform correct pitches, rhythms, and tempos, and to memorize effectively. Suggestions in this section are based on my own experience with the challenges of singing these songs as an undergraduate baritone, as well as the common pitfalls I have seen in teaching this set to undergraduate students.

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[29] James C. McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults* (San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group, 1997); Giuseppe Lamperti and William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom* (New York: Taplinger, 1980).
[30] Giovanni Battista Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto*, with the collaboration of Maximilian Heidrich, trans. Dr. Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1905). Giuseppe Lamperti and William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom* (New York: Taplinger, 1980). Manuel García II, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Part One*, collated, ed., and trans. Donald V. Paschke (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984).
[31] Joan Wall, Robert Caldwell, Sheila Allen, and Tracy Gavilanes, *Diction for Singers*, 2nd ed. (Redmond, WA: Diction for Singers.com, 2012). Madeleine Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* (New York, London: Schirmer Books; Collier Macmillan, 1975).

The artistry section of each song profile will include commentary on how to express and interpret each song. The insights provided here are based on my own interpretations of the songs as well as other scholarly analyses of the poems and music. These include Trevor Hold's *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* and Banfield's *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century*.[32]

Lastly, the ensemble section of the guide will address potential challenges and artistic choices that can be made in collaboration with the pianist. These choices are made based on my experience singing these songs and from the score itself. This portion will be featured only on selected songs (III, VI, and IX) because they contain important moments worth mentioning. The ensemble section is also included, as it is important for singers to develop early on how to work with a pianist to create more artistic and expressive performances.

In general, this pedagogical guide is intended to support developing baritones in their undergraduate studies and covers many of the pitfalls and challenges specific to this voice type. Although the guide is baritone-centric, many of the challenges and skills discussed are often common among all voice types. One major challenge that can plague young baritones is singing in the *passaggio* range. For baritones, this includes roughly the notes from Ab/A3 (first *Passaggio*) to Eb/E4 (second *Passaggio*), although this can change slightly from singer to singer.[33] This cluster of notes is where most untrained baritones will begin to strain their voice as they approach their top range. Many baritones will often compensate for this by using the tongue to prevent the larynx from rising, closing the throat, over-darkening their sound, shouting, and a host of other ineffective strategies. Obviously, these are unintentional actions by the student, but

[32] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005); Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[33] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986).

they are often exaggerated when young singers sing in this range too long before developing their technique. This often makes these problems habitual and leads to the singer having to undo them later in their study.

Perhaps the best way to approach this *passaggio* range is not to avoid it altogether, but to slowly expose the student to it as they progress with their technique. Fortunately, Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* does exactly this as discussed in the introduction. This guide also helps address *passaggio* singing by providing many tips for approaching these areas within the cycle.

Ultimately, this guide is designed to help both teachers and students navigate these songs effectively and build the foundational skills required of classical singers. Within the broader vocal pedagogical community, this song guide also builds on and is consistent with other pedagogical guides for baritone repertoire models.[34] These types of resources are not only practically useful but also help to shed light on the underutilized repertoire and encourage studios to diversify their repertoire for their students.

[34] Jeff MacMullen, George Butterworth's A Shropshire Lad and Ralph Vaughan Williams's House of Life: A Pedagogical Guide for Baritone" (D.M.A. document, The Ohio State University, 2020). Kevin Gwinn, "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: A Pedagogical Guide and Analysis to Select Art Songs for Use in the Voice Studio" (D.M.A. doctoral essay, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, 2022). Kevin C. Helppie, "Butterworth Songs: A Tool for the Developing Male Singer," *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 1 (September/October 2001): 39–42.

I. "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now"

Technical Information:

Range: B2-D#4
Tessitura: E3-B3
Key: E Major
Tempo: *Andante con moto*
Difficulty Classification: Beginner
Rationale: Limited range, brief encounters with *passaggio*, straightforward melody, and rhythms.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: First or Second
Developmental Goals: legato phrasing and maintaining tone and resonance in the upper *passaggio*.

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone:

"Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now" is an excellent opportunity to reinforce balance and *chiaroscuro* for the developing baritone voice, particularly in the upper *passaggio*. The highest note in the piece is only a D♯ 4 on a quick dotted eighth note and occurs three times in the song. Because this neighboring tone is brief, the student is not required to sustain a higher pitch, which can be overwhelming at this stage of development. This "high note" also does not represent the climax of the phrase and is approached by step, making it a wonderful moment for developing singers to build confidence in the upper register. To maintain a balanced tone at these pitches, it's important to consider the vowels and make small adjustments or modifications. The first D♯ 4 is on the word "stands" (see Example 2). This vowel can be inclined to spread at this pitch level, so it is advisable to encourage a rounder vowel, such as [ɑ] to avoid this spreading

Musical Example 2. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now," mm. 4–6.
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



The second D♯ is on the word "take" (see Example 3). This /e/ vowel is ideal for some singers but more challenging for others: some will maintain resonance best by keeping it quite closed, while others may be better served by a taller, more open modification such as /ɛ/.

Musical Example 3. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now," mm. 16-18
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



The last D♯ is on the word “about” (see example 4). Here, the vowel /a/ is called for; however, it is important that the diphthong /aʊ/ is delayed until the very last instant in order to maintain resonance and clarity of the word.

Musical Example 4. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, “Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now,” mm. 25-27
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from “A Shropshire Lad” by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Successfully navigating these notes while keeping proper resonance provides a solid foundation for the young baritone and serves to support further exploration of the upper register.

Breath management

In terms of breath management, this song offers few teaching points, as most of the phrases are about two measures in length and should be easily managed by most young singers. The exception here is the beginning of the song, in which the singer must sing a full 4-measure phrase, ideally without taking a breath. However, if the phrase is too long, the singer can consider taking a breath at the first comma (after Loveliest of Trees) to make it more manageable.

Text and Diction

A key teaching point here is to highlight the text's rhyme scheme. In the opening lines, "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now / Is hung with bloom along the bough," it is important that students keep consistent vowel shapes on the rhyme words, especially *now* and *bough*, so the rhyme reads clearly, and the phrase stays unified. Likewise, in "In stands about the woodland ride / Wearing white for Eastertide," students should be encouraged to bring out the rhyme by matching the vowel color on *ride* and *tide*. Another key point in this song is avoiding an American/English "r" /ɹ/. In a word like *cherry*, using a flipped r [ɾ] can help students learn to hold the pure vowel longer. In words like *more* and *score*, favoring a schwa [ə] rather than leaning into an American /ɹ/ will help the tongue relax and not distort the vowel.

Musicianship

The form in this song is strophic; memorizing a piece in which the music stays essentially the same while the text changes is an important skill to acquire and directly prepares them for other repertoire. Highlighting the subtle differences between strophes can help reinforce memory and encourage students to sing correct pitches. Although the music here is generally straightforward, the opening melody of "and stands about the woodland ride" is not the same in every stanza: in the first stanza, it begins on B natural, whereas in the later stanzas, it begins on F sharp. This small change may be easy to overlook, but drawing attention to it trains students to be more detail-oriented and accurate.

Artistry

As alluded to above, the strophic nature of the piece places the burden on the singer to contrast each strophe, opening a productive teacher/student conversation about interpretation and

personal meaning in the poem. If this song is assigned to younger singers, the speaker's perspective, from age twenty, lands close to the student's own age and can feel quite poignant. The poem's central idea, that there may be only "fifty more" years to enjoy life and that this is not much time, invites sincere interpretive questions that the student must answer: is the poet resigned, grateful, or urgent, and how does that emotional stance evolve from stanza to stanza? Working through those decisions not only strengthens artistry and narrative clarity, but it also supports memorization by giving the student a clear story and a specific dramatic intention for each strophe.

II. “When I Was One and Twenty”

Technical Information:

Range: B2-D#4
Tessitura: C#3-G#3
Key: B Major
Tempo: *Allegretto Scherzando*
Difficulty Classification: Beginner
Rationale: Range and tessitura are easily accessible for young baritones, though there are some challenges in finding certain pitches.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: first or second
Developmental Goal: Artistry, musicianship. Low voice resonance.

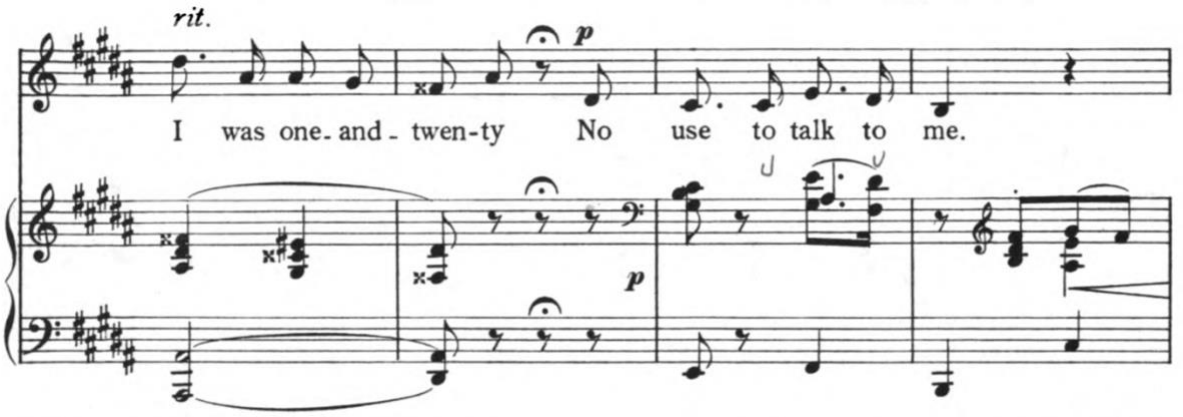
Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

This piece is an excellent choice for teaching resonance in the low voice. The song should feel quite comfortable for many young baritones, as it sits right within a natural speaking range. That said, a resonant tone here can still be challenging if the student is used to singing too far back in the throat or automatically favors darker vowels in this vocal range. One helpful tool is simply speaking the text, as most of the song lives in this speech zone. It is important that they both speak and sing this piece to find the kind of resonance that will carry in a recital hall. The only higher pitches are a brief D♯ and a D natural, neither held very long, and both land on favorable vowels; both are essentially an /a/ on the word I (see Example 5). If the student stays

on that tall vowel and does not go to the diphthong too early, that vowel shape will help them keep the tone resonant and balanced.

Musical Example 5. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "When I was One and Twenty," mm. 17-20
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Breath management

"When I Was One and Twenty" builds to four-measure phrases. This can be challenging for some singers, so it is important that the sound stays closer to speech quality rather than something heavy or over-manufactured. Keeping the tone light and focused at these lower pitches can help the student complete the four-measure span without issue. It may also be helpful to encourage a slightly quicker tempo if the phrases are still too challenging.

Text and Diction

As with many of the songs in this cycle, the rhyme scheme is essential, and, in terms of text and diction, it is important that students learn to bring it out. For instance, the word guineas /ˈgɪnɪs/ must be pronounced correctly in British English so that it truly participates in the rhyme. In the opening, "When I was one and twenty, I heard a wise man say, / Give crowns and pounds and guineas," the word twenty needs to rhyme with guineas, which means the vowel /I/ in

"twenty" has to match "guineas". Because this song is often taken at a quick tempo, clearly articulating and "spitting out" consonants becomes vital for intelligibility, and a practical way to build that skill is to have the student speak the text in rhythm before singing it.

Musicianship

One of the key skills this piece can teach in terms of musicianship is aural skills. The song is in two strophes, and the second half of each strophe contains some intervals that can be tricky for young students, especially as the harmony shifts (see Examples 6 and 7). Although many of the accidentals are supported in the piano part, it is important that students can sing these pitches a cappella, so they truly lock in the changing intervals between the first and second strophes. Having students alternate singing these phrases can also help reinforce this. This work strengthens the ear, helps the student differentiate the strophes more clearly, and supports memorization.

Musical Example 6. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "When I was One and Twenty," mm. 13-16
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Musical Example 7. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "When I Was One and Twenty," mm. 32-36
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Artistry

This song is especially effective for younger singers because the speaker's age, "one and twenty," is likely close to the student's age. The poem is essentially a before-and-after story. At twenty-one, the speaker hears an older person's advice, that you can give "crowns and pounds and guineas," but not your heart away, because love can have a real cost. The speaker dismisses it because he thinks he knows better. When the advice returns in the second strophe, the speaker has learned the hard way that the advice was true, but only when he is two and twenty. That arc invites productive teacher-student discussion about what the student thinks the tone really is, whether it lands as sincere, humorous, or tongue-in-cheek. That interpretive decision naturally helps the singer learn to differentiate the strophes and develop their own artistic views.

III. “There Pass the Careless People”

Technical Information:

Range: B2- E4
Tessitura: E3-B3
Key: E minor
Tempo: *Andante espressivo*
Difficulty Classification: Intermediate
Rationale: Held E4 approached by wide leaps, the tessitura and pitches should be manageable for young baritones.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Third or fourth.
Primary Developmental Goal: Legato line and sustaining higher pitches.

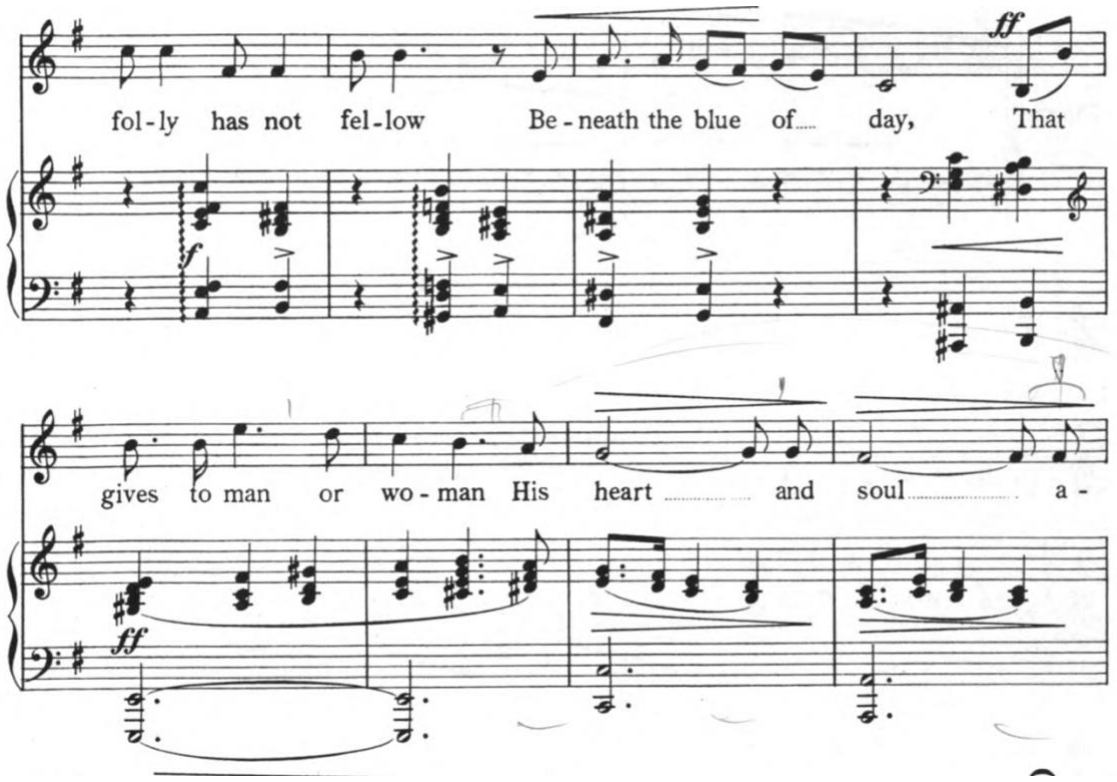
Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

This song gives an ideal opportunity for students to begin sustaining higher notes. The high note here is an E4, which lies just outside the second *passaggio,* making it an ideal first high note to begin sustaining. What can make this moment challenging is how the note is approached: the line climbs through several leaps, including a dramatic span from a low B2 up to the climactic E4 (see Example 8). Those leaps can encourage students to make the sound too heavy; it is important to remind them to keep the sound buoyant and avoid “carrying” the bottom of the voice upward. A simple staccato exercise on the leap can help here. At the top, the tone may tend to spread, particularly if the student sings the vowel [æ] in *man* in a wide mouth position. To maintain a more resonant tone, it is often better to favor [ɑ], which helps keep the resonance tall rather than wide. If the student has developed stable laryngeal control, this can also be a good

moment to discuss and experiment with "turning" or "covering" the voice as the pitch sits in a transitional area for most baritones. Some ways to encourage this are singing a closed [u] vowel or maintaining the beginning of a yawn position. One additional tip is to slightly close the vowels leading into the climax, particularly on "gives to," so the resonance stays more gathered before arriving on the E4.

Musical Example 8. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "There Pass the Careless People" mm. 13-20.
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Breath Management:

This song continues to help students develop four-measure phrasing. The first phrase, "There pass the careless people that call their souls their own," is a full four measures, and at a

slow tempo, it can be challenging for some students. This makes it a useful training tool for efficient breathing. An exercise that has been effective for my students and myself is a sustained "s" or "hiss" while the accompaniment plays. This helps the student feel exactly how much breath energy is required to carry the phrase. This can also be applied to the final phrase, "That gives to man or woman his heart and soul away."

Text and Diction

It is critical in this song to bring out the consonant alliterations. For instance, in "his folly has not fellow," the singer should clearly bring out the [f] sounds, and likewise in "beneath the blue of day," the **[**b] sounds. These subtle inflections help highlight the patterns in the poetry. Again, bringing out the rhyme scheme and keeping vowels consistent can also be applied to this piece. The student should reinforce the rhymes by matching vowel color across the rhymed words, especially in phrases like "call their souls their <u>own</u>," "how idle and <u>alone</u>," "beneath the blue of <u>day</u>," and "his heart and soul <u>away</u>."

Musicianship

Pitches and rhythms are relatively straightforward here, but the skill of pacing dynamics is crucial for singing this song effectively. Ultimately, this short piece crescendos from *pianissimo* in measure 5 to *fortissimo* by the end in measure 18 on the words "that gives to man or woman…". The student must learn to pace the crescendo over several phrases so that the true climactic *fortissimo* lands on the correct text. This requires focused control without "coming off the voice" at the *pianissimo* or pushing/shouting to create the *fortissimo* at the end. As a result, the song creates an excellent opportunity for the teacher and the student to explore how to build dynamic levels efficiently and perform them with intention.

Artistry

"There Pass the Careless People" may feel similar to "When I Was One and Twenty" in that both songs deal with the cost of "giving your heart away". However, this song is much darker, leaning into the consequences of giving your heart and soul to another person rather than treating the lesson with humor and irony. That darkness is further reinforced by Somervell's choice of E minor, and it is far less tongue-in-cheek than "When I Was One and Twenty." Artistically, this gives the teacher and student a useful conversation point about the relationship between the two songs, but also about how to color the opening text versus the ending text as the dynamics build. The fortissimo on "that gives to man or woman / His heart and soul away" raises real interpretive questions and emotions to explore. Brokenheartedness is often a relevant subject for young students and young people in general, and this song can help them develop their own artistic ideas through a subject they are likely to relate to.

Ensemble:

It is important for both pianist and singer to be sensitive to the leading-tone sequence that occurs before the singer's entrance in measure 4 (see Example 9). This sequence begins in the pianist's right hand on beat 2, with D-sharp and F-sharp resolving to E and G, followed by B and D-sharp resolving to C and E, and finally F-sharp and A-sharp resolving to G and the singer's B. This creates a clear pattern of tension and release that should guide the singer's delicate and precise entrance in measure 4.

Musical Example 9. Arthur Somervell, *A Shropshire Lad*, "There Pass the Careless People" mm. 3-5.
Source: Arthur Somervell, *Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman* (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Another especially compelling moment occurs in measures 12–15 (see Example 8), particularly in the rhythmic interplay between singer and pianist. Both performers should reflect and intensify the text's energy. “His folly” should be delivered dramatically, with energized “F’s “that propel the phrase toward the pianist’s block chords on beats 2 and 3; the same is true of “fellow.” In the following measure, however, the pattern shifts: the chords fall on beats 1 and 2, with no further chordal support until after “blue of day.” This makes it essential for the singer to sustain and shape the phrase in a way that builds toward the pianist’s next entrance and, ultimately, the climactic statement, “that gives to man or woman.” The exchange between singer and pianist should feel seamless, with each gesture building naturally toward this expressive high point.

IV. “In Summer-time on Bredon”

Technical Information:

Range: Bb2-E4
Tessitura: G3-D4
Key: C Major
Tempo: *Allegretto*
Difficulty Classification: Advanced
Rationale: Sustained high tessitura in the first and second *passaggio*.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Seventh or eighth
Developmental Goal: Sustain a high tessitura within the first and second *passaggio*.

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

Although the overall range is not extreme, this piece can still be rather challenging for developing baritones as it spends extended time in a higher tessitura around the first and second passaggio, making it difficult to maintain a balanced tone. For that reason, the student should have developed some basic laryngeal stability before attempting the piece.

To maintain balanced resonance, vowel modification will be needed in the second half of each stanza, especially in lines like “Here of a Sunday morning my love and I would lie… and hear the lark so high….” On diphthongs like *my* and *high*, it is important to sustain the first vowel in the diphthong [a] or [ɔ] as long as possible to maintain ideal resonance (see Example 10). On words *“*here” and *“*hear”*,* avoiding the American/English r [ɹ] and favoring a schwa color [ə] will help keep the tongue from grabbing while also creating a better vowel to sing on.

Musical Example 10. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "In Summer-time on Bredon"," mm. 13-19.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Breath Management

Most of the phrase lengths are manageable, usually spanning two to four measures. The punctuation and rests built into the song help give the singer convenient places to breathe. One exception is "But when the snows at Christmas…" which extends 5 measures as the tempo slows a bit (see Example 11).

Musical Example 11. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "In Summer-time on Bredon"," mm. 46-50.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Additionally, a skill to develop with this piece is learning to silently replenish breath. The tendency in this song may be to “stack” air and get tight, especially in the higher sections.

Text and Diction

The critical skill here is to continue to pronounce and shade the vowels according to the rhyme scheme, clear triplet rhyme in lines 2,4 and 5. For example, in the stanza:

The bells would ring to call her

In valleys miles away:

"Come all to church, good people;

Good people, come and pray."

But here my love would stay.

Singers should take care to match vowel quality and clarity in these rhymed words to help the listener appreciate the poetic structure and to reinforce the natural musical cadence built into the text.

Musicianship

The subset of musicianship that this song can most appropriately help with is memorization. The task of memorizing this piece should not be underestimated. Luckily, there are some "landmarks" that can help students memorize and interpret the song. Essentially, the song is broken into 4 musical sections, each of which chronologically follows three of the 4 seasons. Section 1 is summer; the lovers are happily enjoying their courtship. Section 2 is spring; the lovers get married. Section 3 is winter; the woman/lover has died. Section 4, present day: The man confronts his loss, reminded by the church bells that echoed in the beginning. These seasonal landmarks, and simply following the story's order, can be an effective tool to encourage efficient memorization of this song.

Artistry

"Bredon Hill" is an excellent tool for teaching emotional contrast and for portraying the song's narrative. Interpretively, the student must learn to color each section of the story in a distinct way. The opening stanzas need genuine warmth and brightness that does not allude to the upcoming tragedy. The shift into C minor at "But when the snows at Christmas…" is the emotional pivot, and it requires a noticeable change in vocal color and dramatic weight to match the sudden drama of the text. Lastly, the final section leaves room for discussion between the student and the teacher to determine the emotion behind this text. Is it determination that the man will be reunited with his lost loved one, or is it irony and resentment against the church? Several

choices are possible here, and an opportunity for the student to create their own interpretation is vital to building their individual artistry.

V. “The Street Sounds to the Soldiers’ Tread”

Technical Information:

Range: Bb2- Eb4
Tessitura: Eb3-Bb3
Key: Eb Major
Tempo: *Allegro*
Difficulty Classification: Intermediate/Advanced
Rationale: Some sustained high notes (Eb), some rhythmic difficulties.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Fifth or sixth.
Developmental Goal: Sustaining higher pitches, maintaining resonance in a wide range.

Tone:

While the overall range is accessible for most baritones, the several sustained E♭4 notes can become taxing over time, offering an opportunity to work on sustaining higher notes without fatiguing the voice. To accomplish this, it is important to focus on a balanced tone separate from the text to achieve ease in the voice. This can be done by singing the line on a neutral vowel, aiming for easy resonance without pushing. After this, it is often helpful to then sing only the vowels of the text with the same goal in mind, before finally adding the text back in.

The thick, chordal accompaniment can also entice the student to push or shout to be heard, making this piece a strong training ground for learning healthy projection over a loud accompaniment. This can also be mitigated by having the pianist lower the piano lid or use the soft pedal as needed. Vowel modification will certainly be required throughout the song, especially on the many Eb4s. For instance, “sky to sky” should favor a taller [ɑ] rather than a spread [a] (see Example 12). The singer should also delay the diphthong here as long as possible.

Musical Example 12. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "The Street Sounds to the Soldiers' Tread" mm. 17-18.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Breath and Alignment

Most phrases fall into a manageable two to four-measure range. The primary challenge comes at the end: "Soldier, I wish you well" stretches four measures, with the high E♭4 sustained for two full measures (see Example 13). Students will need to take an appropriate breath after the word "soldier" to ensure they have the breath to sustain this climactic phrase. Practicing this phrase on a sustained hiss or 's' will help the student feel the necessary breath required for this phrase.

Musical Example 13. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "The Street Sounds to the Soldiers' Tread" mm. 42-53.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904).



Text and Diction

Developing clear diction in this song will not only improve word clarity but also help the sound cut through the dense accompaniment. Consonants should be 'overdone' here, occurring slightly before the beat to further help the student be heard and stay in time. Words like *drunk* and *dry* can also trip up American singers if the American/English r [ɹ] gets pulled too far back; a flipped [ɾ] is necessary for these words.

Musicianship

Much of the musicianship in this song is observing and executing the written dynamics throughout. It is easy for anyone to sing this entire piece in a shouty, overly loud dynamic, as introduced by the martial rhythms and triumphal nature of the accompaniment. However, this is not indicated in the score; in fact, Somervell is meticulous in his dynamic markings and crescendos, decrescendos. Observing these markings will not only help the singer stay true to the composition but also save their voice, as the pacing of the dynamics does not require a true *fortissimo* until the last phrase.

Artistry

This song captures a unique moment of connection in the cycle. As a British regiment passes, one soldier turns and makes eye contact with the speaker. Although they are strangers who will likely never meet again, they share a brief connection. Many artistic choices can be made here concerning interpretation. One of the most interesting choices is how to interpret the final 'I wish you well'. Is this truly a sincere moment between the speaker and soldier, and how should this impact the way the student delivers the line? Practicing speaking the text with

different intonations can help the student discover their own preference and artistic choice considering this phrase.

VI. “On the Idle Hill of Summer”

Technical Overview:

Range:C#3-E4

Tessitura: E3-B4

Key: B Major

Tempo: *Non troppo andante*

Difficulty Classification: Intermediate

Rationale: Sustained climactic E4, some melodic challenges, manageable tessitura.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Third or fourth.

Developmental Goal: Dynamic control, exploration of vocal colors based on interpretation of the text.

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

The most significant teaching point here is vocal coloring. The singer must learn to change the color of their voice dramatically while still singing in a healthy, resonant manner. The example here is the pianissimo material on “East and West on fields forgotten” and “Bleach the bones of comrade slain,” as the text and music shift to reflect the horrors of war. This invites a more veiled, whispered, or even sinister kind of vocal timbre. The key is that the student should not achieve these effects by coming off the voice or tightening the throat. A useful process is to first sing the phrase with a neutral vowel or at a healthy dynamic to ensure everything is free and relaxed before exploring various vocal colors. From there, teachers can then ask the student to try the same passage in a variety of ways while keeping the core of the voice intact and healthy.

Breath Management

Phrase length here is rather short, only about 2-3 measure phrases, however the end of the piece contains three consecutive phrases that have no rests given. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce a "catch breath," a silent, quick inhalation that avoids stacking air.

Text and Diction

Some of the best diction moments in this song come from consonant alliteration, especially in the middle and ending verses. It is important that the student brings out these alliterative consonants, so the listener is aware of the patterns the poet built into the text. The clearest examples are "East and west on fields forgotten, bleach the bones of comrades slain, lovely lads and dead and rotten, none that go return again," where emphasizing the repeated consonants adds to the expressive nature of these lines.

Musicianship

Most of the rhythm and melodic writing in this piece is not challenging; however, the B section, beginning with "East and West on fields forgotten…" introduces some melodic challenges. The first phrase is straightforward, but when we get to lovely lads and dead and rotten, the notes are nearly the same as the "East and West.." except the G♯s have become G naturals. It is tempting for the singer to keep singing G♯ out of habit, even though the harmony and the piano clearly shift to G natural (see Example 14). A practical way to sing this accurately is to have the student play the E minor harmony underneath, then alternate the two versions of the phrase back-to-back. This trains the ear and helps the singer differentiate the repeated material.

Musical Example 14. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "On the Idle Hill of Summer" mm. 21-26.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Artistry

The song begins in a pastoral, serene sound setting, but quickly shifts into a confrontation with the horrors of war, placing the aftermath of a battle directly into a peaceful landscape. Some of the key artistic choices involved have been discussed in sections on tone and diction, but the ending raises more opportunities for artistic interpretation. The final lines, "Gay the files of scarlet follow. / Woman bore me, I will rise," sit over a triumphant, chordal accompaniment that can sound almost heroic. Yet, given Housman's typically cynical and ironic voice, it seems unlikely that the poem is endorsing young men going off to war and dying for their country. That potential contradiction between the music and the text merits discussion. It is a common issue in

art song as the interpretation of the poetry and the music do not always align; learning to think through those moments helps students develop critical judgment and become artists themselves.

Ensemble

This piece offers wonderful opportunities for ensemble choices and artistry, especially as the piano establishes the atmosphere from the very beginning with grace-note figures in the left hand, evoking the sound of a drummer marching into battle. These grace notes should be detached and crisp to really emulate the sound of a drum. The singer then enters and describes the scene almost as if in a dream state. At first, everything seems peaceful, until we arrive at the second section, "east and west on fields forgotten," where the speaker begins to describe the horrors that occur on the battlefield. Here, it is important not only for the singer to adopt a different color but also for the pianist, perhaps a darker, more weighty color, to match the singer's text (see Example 14).

Another important moment to highlight is the lead-in to the climactic ending: "Far the calling bugles hollo." In the measures leading up to it, one can begin to feel and hear the return of the original melody from the song's opening, but this should not be revealed too early. Instead, the performers should observe the gradual crescendo with a bit of restraint so that the singer enters at the true climax of their entrance. (see Example 15) The singer carries this climactic material through to the final line, "Woman bore me, I will rise," after which the pianist should take over for the remainder of the song. The extended postlude should sound bombastic and triumphant, fully matching the energy the singer has just established.

Musical Example 15. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, “On the Idle Hill of Summer” mm. 27-33.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from “A Shropshire Lad” by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



VII. **“**White in the Moon the Long Road Lies”

Technical Information:

Range: C#3-E4

Tessitura: G3-D4

Key: B minor

Tempo: *Molto sostenuto*

Difficulty Classification: Intermediate

Rationale: Requires dynamic control in the *passaggio.*

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Fourth or Fifth.

Developmental Goal: Develop ease in the *passaggio* and develop expressive text delivery.

Pedagogical Guide

Tone

The main challenge here is developing the skill of singing higher passaggio pitches at a *pianissimo* dynamic without coming off the voice or straining. This *pianissimo* dynamic at higher notes comes up repeatedly, with the first instance in the opening phrase, where the singer must float the word *moon* on a high D4 (see Example 16). Because this higher tessitura can feel exposed, it helps to avoid treating *pianissimo* as simply “less volume,” which often leads students to back off the breath support and crack or strain the voice. Instead, framing *pianissimo* as a gentle vocal color can help students maintain vocal stability and ease in the tone while maintaining a centered, supported core.

Musical Example 16. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, “White in the Moon the Long Road Lies.”
mm. 4- 6.

Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Breath Management

The potential pitfall in this song is that many students will lose cord closure and turn breathy as soon as they see *pianissimo*, especially at a slow tempo. That breathiness quickly becomes a compounded problem: it weakens the tone and makes even moderate phrases feel harder to sustain because the air is wasted. For that reason, the student should first be able to maintain clean cord closure and steady support at a comfortable dynamic, and it can be useful to temporarily ignore the *pianissimo* marking until that coordination is secure. Once the closure is consistent, *pianissimo* can be reintroduced as a color that fits with the emotion of the line. When the student keeps closure and support intact, the soft dynamic becomes sustainable, and the phrases stay calm and controlled rather than airy and unstable.

Text and Diction

The opening phrase "White in the moon…" returns three times, so it is important that *white* is pronounced with an aspirate [h] on the onset, which many American speakers may not naturally emphasize. The word *moon* also appears repeatedly on higher pitches, and it is critical that students keep the vowel pure, [u], rather than into an Americanized diphthong. As in

many songs in this cycle, the rhyme scheme should also be made clear through consistent vowel color on the rhymed words. Early on, *above* and *love* form an important rhyme pair, and similar rhyme connections continue throughout the poem.

Musicianship

Much of the musicianship challenges and skills in this song deal with rhythmic accuracy. The two against three between the vocal line and accompaniment can be difficult for students learning the song. For that reason, it is often best for the student to learn the vocal rhythm confidently before adding the piano accompaniment. A common trouble spot is in the second stanza, "Still hangs the hedge without a gust, still, still the shadows hang." The first *still* breaks the familiar dotted–eighth–sixteenth pattern and arrives as consecutive eighth notes that may feel quicker than the student expects (see Example 17).

Musical Example 17. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "White in the Moon the Long Road Lies."
mm. 13- 15.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Additionally, the goal in this piece is to keep the legato line even despite the somewhat jagged pitches and dotted rhythms that may lead to choppy singing. One practical fix is to have the student lean into the natural strong beats and stressed words, for example, in "White in the moon, the long road lies; / The moon stands blank above," so the line stays connected.

Artistry

This is one of the most beautiful pieces in the cycle. The piano part alone feels like its own work, and when the vocal line is sung correctly, it creates a serene, suspended atmosphere that can feel reminiscent of Schumann or Brahms Lieder. At its core, the song paints a picture of a soldier traveling on a moonlit night, hoping to make it back home. This hopeful longing to return needs to be present throughout.

Pedagogically, this creates an interpretive and moving moment for students. Asking them to define what "home" means to them, especially if they are experiencing homesickness in college, can help them relate to the emotion of the text in a personal way and form an artistic intention that is genuine to their own experience.

VIII. “Think No More, Lad Laugh, Be Jolly”

Technical Overview

Range: G2-E4

Tessitura: A3-E4

Key: G Major

Tempo: *Allegro*

Difficulty Classification: Advanced

Rationale: Diction at a fast tempo, higher tessitura, and several sustained high notes.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: (8-Semester Model): six or seven.

Developmental Goals: Clear diction and sustaining high tessitura.

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

The wide range in this piece creates a meaningful challenge in maintaining resonance not only on the high pitches but also on the lower pitches. Several phrases span more than an octave, and one of the toughest is the second phrase, which ends on the text “falling sky.” Here, the line drops from a high D4 down an octave lower and then finally the G2 below that, all within 2 measures (see Example 18). This low G2 can feel very low for many baritones, especially after coming from the upper register. The main goal here is to keep the low note relaxed and speech-like, not pressed. If needed, using “vocal fry” can help get more clarity on this note.

Musical Example 18. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "Think No More, Lad Laugh, Be Jolly" mm. 13- 19.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



A balanced tone is also challenged by certain vowels and leaping intervals throughout. The word "laugh" places the [æ] vowel on an E4, which can easily spread. Favoring a taller [a] can help maintain balance and resonance. Because these pitches are often approached by leaps, it is also important that the student not add vocal weight. A practical way to approach this is to hum the phrase with support, or use other SOVT exercises (straw, lip trills, tongue trills) to prevent the student from pushing the sound.

Breath Management

Breath management in this piece is made slightly easier by the *allegro* tempo, but only if the singer can breathe efficiently in tempo without creating tension or taking air. The ability to take a quick "catch breath" and still stay relaxed is critical. A useful way to practice this is to first take the phrase out of tempo and have the student breathe normally, using a silent inhalation

and a diaphragmatic–intercostal breath, with no pressure to gasp for air. After the student is successful, they can put the phrase back in tempo, replicating the same breath sensation.

This comes up clearly in the second phrase, “Empty heads and tongues of talking made the rough road easy walking…,” where the singer will need a quick replenishing breath to finish the thought, “and the feather-pate of folly bears the falling sky.” That breath must be taken in a fraction of a beat and then sustained for the remainder of the phrase.

Text and Diction

The quick tempo and rapid succession of words make text and diction a major challenge in this song. There is simply a lot of text to deliver in a short amount of time, and if the singer waits until the beat to form consonants, the line will start to drag. The skill to develop is anticipating initial consonants slightly before the beat. For example, in the opening “Think no more…,” the initial “th” should be prepared just ahead of the beat so the vowel can land in time. Another practical tool is to speak the text in rhythm before singing it, so the student learns to maintain the tempo. It can also help to practice with a metronome, starting at a comfortable tempo and gradually increasing the BPM until the marked *allegro* is more comfortable.

Musicianship

This song has some Handel-esque qualities, so the student needs a certain amount of vocal agility to keep the tempo moving. An example is in “Feather-pate of folly bears the falling sky,” where the quick sixteenth-note figures can easily drag if the singer is too heavy. One helpful strategy is to sing the passage staccato with a metronome, making sure every note lands exactly in time. Then the student can return to legato with the metronome, keeping the same rhythmic clarity.

Beyond that, the pitch content is relatively manageable, with very few accidentals. The main musicianship challenge is rhythmic, as these fast patterns often need to be spoken in rhythm repeatedly before the student can sing them accurately.

Artistry

"Think No More, Lad, Laugh, Be Jolly" poses some real artistic questions as the music, while seemingly light-hearted, almost like a drinking song, the text underneath is more complex. On the surface, the poem is straightforward: do not worry so much, do not obsess or overthink, just enjoy life and be happy. However, it is unlikely that the poet is really suggesting people just be ignorant and float through life oblivious to the world around them. Underneath the lightheartedness, the poem offers subtle insight into the human experience, how people cope with the difficulties of life, and, more importantly, how the character must deal with the realities of going to war. These insights discussed between teacher and student can help create a less one-dimensional performance of this song.

IX. “Into My Heart an Air That Kills”

Technical Overview:

Range: C3-D4
Tessitura: Eb-Bb
Key: Eb Major
Tempo: *Andante sostenuto*
Difficulty Classification: Beginner
Rationale: Easy range and tessitura, straightforward pitches and rhythms.

Developmental Information

Recommended Semester: Second or third
Developmental Goals: Artistic interpretation.

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

The repeated B-flats throughout the first page of this song pose some tone challenges that will likely need to be addressed, especially for a lower baritone or bass-baritone, as this B♭ often sits right at the first passaggio (see Example 19). It will be important that the student keep the sound light and buoyant on these repeated pitches and does not let the repetition create an overly heavy tone. As mentioned elsewhere, it can help to rehearse the passage in staccato, or even at a slightly faster tempo at first, and then return to the indicated tempo once the student maintains consistent tone. The *pianissimo* dynamic adds another layer of difficulty, and it’s important that the student maintain their core sound while singing at this dynamic. Posing this as a color rather than less volume can yield positive results in this regard.

Musical Example 19. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "Into My Heart an Air That Kills" mm. 1-6.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Breath management

Breath management in this song is straightforward. The phrases are generally short, often only two measures, so breath management and phrasing should not present a challenge for most students.

Text and Diction

Some small diction notes will need to be considered in this song, especially with the consonant "r". It is important that students do not lean into an American r-colored vowel, since that often tightens the tongue and negatively affects tone. In words like *air*, it is often better to

favor a schwa [ə], rather than sustaining an American/English **"r".** The same idea applies to other words in this song, such as *spire*, *heart*, and *farm*, where using a schwa instead of an "r" helps keep the tone released and closer to a British pronunciation.

Musicianship

The close relationship of this song to "Loveliest of Trees" poses the main challenges of this piece. As the melodic material is so similar in the accompaniment, students may be inclined to miss entrances, so it is important that they understand what is the same and what is different. The tempo here is also much slower, and the roles are essentially reversed: instead of carrying the melody, the voice sustains repeated B♭s while the piano presents the melody of "Loveliest of Trees."

The repeated B♭s create the other primary musicianship challenge: finding musical line on repeated notes. The best solution is to make text inflection the driver of the phrasing. Helping the student identify the stressed words and syllables and shaping the dynamic and consonant energy around those stresses encourages true legato and forward motion even when the pitch does not change.

Artistry

"Into My Heart an Air That Kills" contains some of the most beautiful poetry in the cycle and is also one of Housman's best-known texts. The poem is, in essence, nostalgic, but not in a comforting way. The speaker looks toward the "blue-remembered hills" and names them "the land of lost content," and that memory is painful as he can never return. Whether that means he cannot physically return, or that the past feeling of contentment is lost to him forever, is unclear.

Somervell deepens this deep sadness by bringing back the music of "Loveliest of Trees" from the opening of the cycle. However, he assigns the singer a nearly monotone line of repeated B-flats for several phrases while the piano carries much of the "Loveliest of Trees" material underneath. One strong interpretation is that the speaker is emotionally numb, looking back at a place that once meant happiness but now only triggers pain. The interpretive question to explore with students is how much stillness, numbness, and restraint the singer should allow. Working through why Somervell recalls the first song here, and what it means for the character's emotional state, makes this movement especially meaningful in performance, particularly if the student performs the full cycle.

Ensemble

This piece also features another special ensemble opportunity between pianist and singer. On the first page, the piano line carries almost the entire melody of "Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now," while the singer is given repeated Bb pitches. Because of this, it is critical for the pianist to bring out the melody clearly, while the singer allows the pianist to function as the soloist. The singer's repeated pitches create a trance-like atmosphere of reflection, colored by deep sadness. Within this texture, both performers should also aim for a seamless blend, so that the singer's repeated pitches feel as though they arise naturally out of the piano line rather than standing apart from it. For instance, the singer's first entrance on a Bb on beat 3 of measure 2 should be very clean, but flow naturally out of the piano's right hand that moves from Bb to C and back to Bb (see Example 19). This entrance can then create a special moment in which the singer organically emerges from the piano texture.

It is also important to note that Somervell indicates a tempo much slower than that of No. 1. Therefore, this song should not be performed at the speed of the original "Loveliest of Trees

the Cherry Now". Additionally, on the second page, it is important to note that the singer takes back the melody on the text, "That is the land of lost content." Here, the roles are reversed, and the singer once again assumes the melodic line to finish the song.

X. “The Lads in Their Hundreds”

Technical Overview

Range: D3-F4
Tessitura: Ab3-Eb4
Key: Ab Major
Tempo: *Allegretto ma con molto espressione*
Difficulty Classification: Advanced
Rationale: Repeated high F4s and high tessitura. Many rhythmic and diction challenges.

Developmental Information:

Recommended Semester: Seventh or Eighth
Developmental Goals: Clear diction and comfort level singing in a higher *tessitura.*

Pedagogical Guide:

Tone

Maintaining a homogeneous sound throughout this piece can be challenging because of the number of high Fs that sit above the second passaggio for many baritones. The student needs to approach these pitches with a comfortably stable larynx and allow the voice to “turn,” rather than muscling or shouting the pitch. A practical way to build that coordination is to train the phrases first on a neutral vowel such as [ə], and on the Fs using a more closed vowel such as [u] to encourage this “turn of the voice”. [u] encourages a deeper laryngeal position and can help the student find the “tilt” necessary to sing these notes freely.

Once words are added, the goal is to maintain that same vocal coordination even when the written vowels may seem less helpful, necessitating vowel modification. Fortunately, several of the Fs fall on workable vowels, for example *“*there” can favor a more closed [e], and “few” naturally leans into [u]. Other Fs may need a taller, slightly darker “eh” color, such as

[ɛ] on the word “then” to keep the resonance balanced. The most dangerous F is often the one on *lads*, where the natural [æ] will encourage spreading; here, the student should strongly consider a taller [ɑ] to maintain resonance and help the voice turn (see Example 20).

Musical Example 20. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, “The Lads in Their Hundreds” mm. 22-25.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from “A Shropshire Lad” by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Breath Management

Breath management is one of the most challenging aspects of this piece, largely because there are very few written rests within each stanza to give the singer time to breathe. As a result, most breaths must be taken quickly and in tempo. This makes efficient “catch breaths” essential. Breaths at commas should absolutely be taken to keep the phrases manageable, but they still need to be silent, quick, and unstrained.

A useful way to train this is to take the phrase out of tempo so the student can practice a relaxed, silent inhalation with a deep diaphragmatic breath. After success in this step, they can then put it back into tempo while maintaining the exact same feeling of inhalation. This helps prevent the stacking of air and reduces the tendency to tighten as the tessitura rises. Another practical cue is the “surprise breath,” a quick, natural inhale as if surprised can help the student find the catch breath without creating undue tension.

Text and Diction:

It becomes imperative in this piece that the singer clearly delivers the text at the indicated tempo. They will need to articulate consonants while still maintaining rhythmic integrity. Speaking the words in rhythm is an important first step before attempting to sing the words. Placing consonants slightly before the beat, especially on entrances will encourage the student to stay clear without falling behind tempo. Most of the words are straightforward to pronounce, but the singer can add more expression by bringing out the consonant alliterations that appear throughout. Examples of these alliterative moments include: **"**tokens to tell," "fortunate fellows," and "talk to them friendly and wish them farewell."

Musicianship:

One of the main skills to develop in this song is maintaining the indicated tempo. A practical way to build that is to speak the text in rhythm with a metronome, starting at a comfortable BPM and gradually increasing until the marked tempo feels secure, then transferring that same clarity into singing.

The other likely point of confusion is the 15/8 meter, since most singers may have little experience with it. In practice, it becomes much more manageable when the teacher frames it as essentially two 6/8 bars plus a pickup, rather than something overtly challenging. If the student can feel the underlying compound pulse, the beat pattern becomes easier to comprehend, and the whole song settles much more easily.

Artistry

This song is another double-meaning piece. On the surface, the music feels carefree and light-hearted, with its lilted triplet rhythms, and a text that sounds equally casual. However, digging into the poem reveals that this may not be the truth. The speaker is looking at a crowd of young men and realizing, especially in the final refrain, that "the lads that will die in their glory" will "never be old." That line inevitably points toward young men unknowingly headed for an early death, and it connects to the cycle's recurring military and tragic war themes.

For that reason, it is important that the student recognizes this likely intentional duality between the music and the text, so that they do not unknowingly perform the song as merely a carefree drinking song. The interpretive goal may be to decide how to express that knowledge through vocal color, pacing, and emphasis of certain words.

As the closing number of the cycle, it captures many of the central ideas of the poems, including mortality, nostalgia, and the tragedy of war, echoed in the fact that many of these young men will disappear without warning, without "tokens to tell," and without anyone truly able to say goodbye.

Chapter II: Song Substitutions

The following substitution list pairs a song from Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* with the two most performed songs from the TEXOMA NATS conference (2016-2022), Ralph Vaughan Williams' "The Vagabond" from *The Songs of Travel*, and Roger Quilter's "Go, Lovely Rose" (see Expanding the Canon fig. 2 and 3). The third song, Gerald Finzi's "Come Away, Come Away Death" from *Let Us Garlands Bring,* was chosen because of its prominence in the first survey taken from baritone and bass baritone recitals across the country. Collectively, these three songs were also chosen because together they feature the three most popular composers performed in the English art song canon, according to data in chapter 1. Together, they account for 71% of all the NATS entries in the college TBB categories (see Expanding the Canon, figs. 2 and 3) and were featured on 93% of the recital programs survey (see Expanding the Canon, fig. 1).

These three songs by Vaughan Williams, Finzi, and Quilter are immensely popular for young baritones, and for good reason; however, they are perhaps over-programmed. To provide teachers and students with viable alternatives to these perhaps overprescribed songs, I have paired each of them with a song from Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* that shares comparable pedagogical aims and tempos, dynamics, and themes. For each song substitution, I have provided essential information about the song to be substituted and the song, such as key, range, tempos, etc., as well as a brief overview, similar to the layout of the song guides in chapter 1. This same information is provided for the Somervell substitute, along with a brief explanation of why this pair was chosen.

1. "The Vagabond" R.V. Williams

Technical Information:

Range: A2- Eb4
Tessitura: Eb3-Bb3
Key: C Minor
Tempo: *Allegro Moderato (Alla Marcia)*
Difficulty Classification: Intermediate
Rationale: Some sustained high notes (Eb), some rhythmic and melodic challenges.

Overview:

Based on the Texoma NATS data and the master's and senior recital programs, "The Vagabond" was clearly the most frequently performed selection among the English art song choices. As the opening song of Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel*, it has become a quintessential baritone "rite of passage" in the undergraduate studio. The march-like piano writing vividly imitates the character's movement and sets the cycle's independent, rebellious tone, which often connects easily with male college-age singers. Its memorable melodic line and poignant poetic character make it a studio favorite for good reason.

Pedagogically, the song offers clear opportunities to address artistry, tone, and technique, particularly sustaining resonance at repeated high E♭s without shouting, while also finding focused "bite" in the lower, more declamatory moments. With a tessitura that is generally manageable yet demanding enough to build stamina, it often suits second- or third-year undergraduates. At the same time, the piece is frequently over-assigned, as our data suggests. The following substitution is offered for teachers who want to diversify repertoire while targeting similar thematic and technical goals.

Substitute: "The Street Sounds to the Soldiers' Tread"

Technical Information:

Range: Bb2- Eb4

Tessitura: Eb3-Bb3

Key: Eb Major

Tempo: *Allegro*

Difficulty Classification: Intermediate/Advanced

Rationale: Some sustained high notes (Eb), occasional rhythmic challenges.

Reasoning:

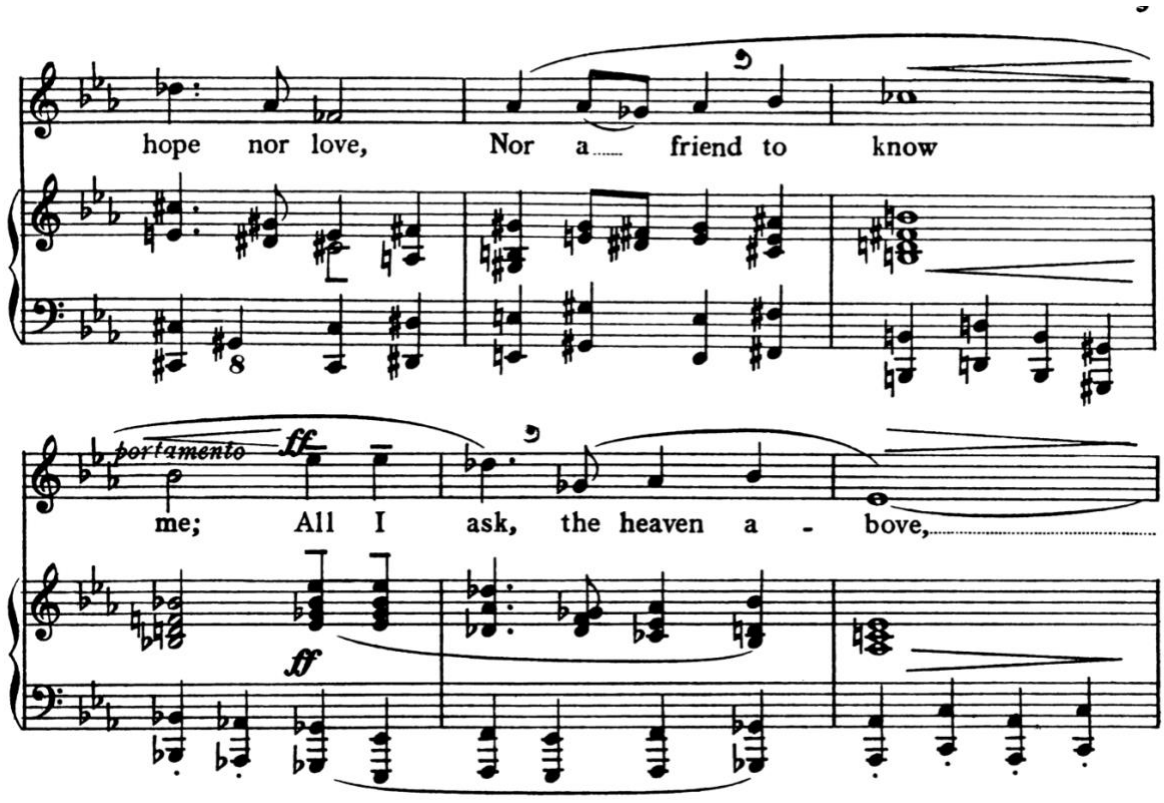
This song aligns closely with the vagabond in several ways. The range is nearly identical, and the tonal relationship of the key as well, as it is in the relative major of "The Vagabond*'s"* C minor. The tempo markings and articulations are likewise comparable, as both pieces contain *Allegro*/march-like character.

Pedagogically, the repeated sustained E♭s in *"*The Street sounds to the Soldiers' Tread." train the same core skill of maintaining a balanced, resonant upper register without pushing or shouting (see Examples 21 and 22). In addition, both songs place the singer against a thick accompaniment, making them effective for teaching projection and clarity without requiring muscular effort. Finally, both songs feature a wide range of dynamics, requiring the student to make artistic choices while maintaining healthy vocal technique.

Musical Example 21. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "The Street Sounds to the Soldiers' Tread" mm. 42-47.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904



Musical Example 22. Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Songs of Travel*, "The Vagabond" mm. 71-76.
Source: Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Songs of Travel* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1960).



2. "Come away, Come away, Death" By Gerald Finzi

Technical Information:

Range: A#2- D4

Tessitura: E3-B3

Key: B Minor

Tempo: *Lugubre*

Difficulty Classification: intermediate

Rationale: Favorable range and *tessitura*. Requires some dynamic control of longer phrases, breath management, and rhythmic challenges

Overview:

"Come Away, Come Away Death" is one of the most frequently assigned settings for young singers, and both Finzi's and Quilter's versions are common choices to give young students. While the overall range and *tessitura* are not extreme, the piece can still be deceptively challenging because of its many passages beginning on a high D4 in the upper *passaggio*. For that reason, the primary pedagogical goals often center on maintaining resonance and core tone at soft dynamics, as well as efficient breath management, especially in the extended final phrase. Poetically, the text is a lament over unrequited love and heartbreak, a theme that may resonate with young college students.

Substitute: "White in the Moon the Long Road Lies"

Technical Information:

Range: C#3-E4

Tessitura: G3-D4

Key: B minor

Tempo: *Molto sostenuto*

Difficulty Classification: Intermediate

Rationale: Requires dynamic control in the *passaggio*. Manageable range and tessitura.

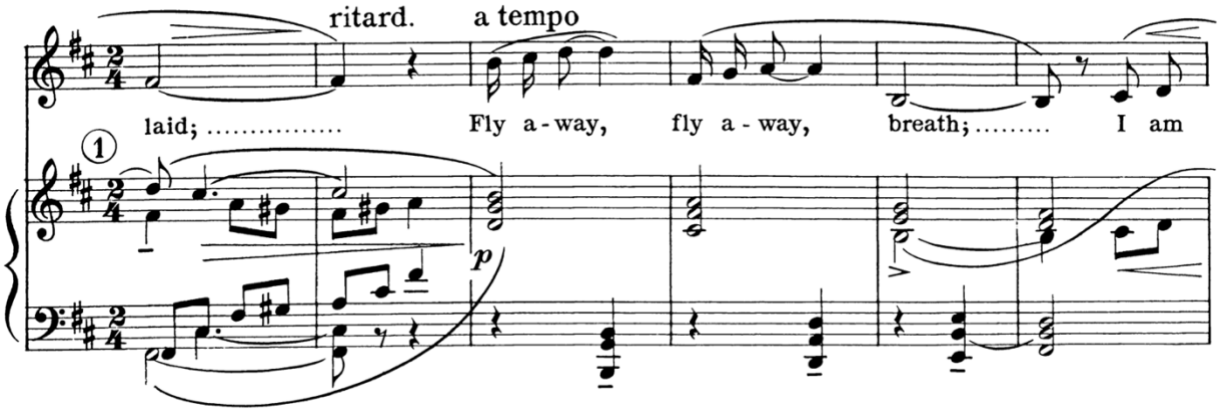
Reasoning:

"White in the Moon, the Long Road Lies" is a comparable substitute for "Come Away, Come Away Death," as it inhabits the same general technical and expressive world. From a technical standpoint, it is in the same key and similar tempo as "Come Away, come Away death". The central pedagogical goals here are also similar, maintaining soft dynamics on higher pitches, keeping clean onset and cord closure at *pianissimo* dynamic levels, and sustaining resonance without letting the tone go breathy or unsupported (see Examples 23 and 24). Poetically, while the narratives differ, both songs convey deep sadness or longing, making it an easy switch for a teacher looking for an alternative piece that retains the same tone.

Musical Example 23. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "White in the Moon the Long Road Lies."mm. 4- 6.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Musical Example 24. Gerald Finzi, Let us Garlands Bring "Come Away, Come Away, Death." mm. 11-16.
Source: Gerald Finzi, Let us Garlands Bring (London: Boosey & Co., 1942).



3. "Go, Lovely Rose" By Roger Quilter

Technical Overview:

Range: A2- Eb4

Tessitura: Eb3-Bb3

Key: Eb Major

Tempo: *Moderato poco con moto*

Difficulty Classification: Beginner

Rationale: Favorable range and *tessitura*, some rhythmic and melodic challenges

Overview:

"Go, Lovely Rose" is a studio favorite for young male singers, often appearing in the freshman or sophomore years, and it remains one of Quilter's best-known works. The text is accessible and uses familiar vocabulary, making its romantic message easy for students to grasp. The poem essentially states that beauty and youth are temporary, and the rose or "woman" should act now and appreciate her beauty before it's too late. Musically, the setting is generally straightforward and easy to learn for developing singers. Aside from a sustained Eb4, it presents few major technical obstacles. For those reasons, it is an effective early choice, but, as both the data and studio experience suggest, it is also one of the most frequently over-prescribed songs in the canon.

Substitute: "Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now"

Technical Overview:

Range: B2-D#4

Tessitura: E3-B3

Key: E Major

Tempo: *Andante con moto*

Difficulty Classification: Beginner

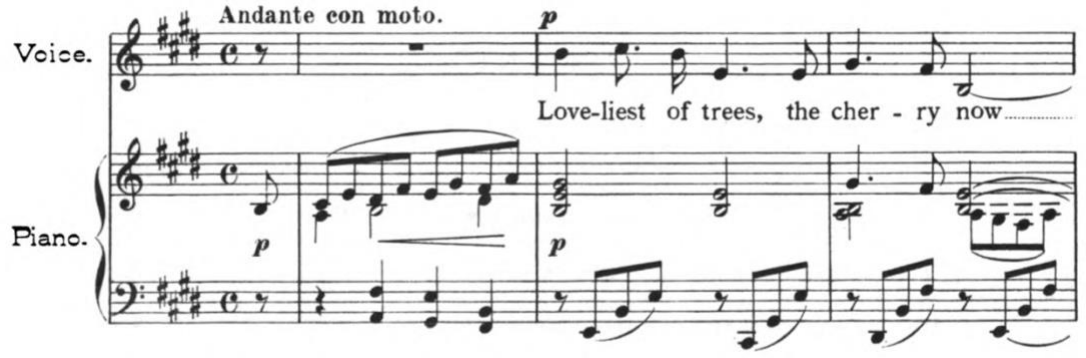
Rationale: Limited range, brief encounters with, straightforward melody, and rhythms.

Reasoning:

"Loveliest of Trees" is a highly comparable substitute for Quilter's "Go, Lovely Rose" because the technical criteria and vocal demands are highly similar. Both are in a major mode, with comparable tempi, character, and manageable ranges and tessituras for developing baritones (see examples 25 and 26). Like "Go Lovley rose", "Loveliest of Trees " is also well suited to younger undergraduate singers as its text and musical language are straightforward and immediately comprehensible.

Poetically, both songs revolve around the same central idea that life and beauty are short-lived. Quilter's setting frames the message as a directive, urging action before beauty fades, whereas Housman's text is more reflective, appreciating nature/life while recognizing the limited time to enjoy them.

Musical Example 25. Arthur Somervell, A Shropshire Lad, "Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now." mm. 1- 3.
Source: Arthur Somervell, Song Cycle from "A Shropshire Lad" by A. E. Housman (London: Boosey & Co., 1904)



Musical Example 26. Roger Quilter, "Go, Lovely Rose." mm. 1-5.
Source: Roger Quilter, "Go, Lovely Rose" (London: Chappell & Co., 1923)



Conclusion

As discussed in chapter one, there is a clear pattern of performing a limited selection of repertoire within the English art song canon. This pattern perhaps highlights broader trends in classical music of performing the same "familiar favorites" as seen in piano, opera, and orchestral concerts. Although these canonical pieces are undoubtedly great, they often leave valuable and beautiful compositions overlooked. This document highlights just one example of that broader tendency and aims to encourage further discussion of the repertoire choices we make and whether there are pieces beyond the established canon worth performing and studying.

One avenue for further research and performance is Somervell's last song cycle entitled *A Broken Arc* (1923), with texts by Robert Browning. This work is cited among Somervell's finest by scholar Stephen Banfield, and its unfair neglect is mentioned several times in books by Gordon Cox and Trevor Hold, yet neither can identify a clear rationale for it.[35] Apart from a fine recording by the English Baritone Christopher Maltman, one can only speculate why the cycle remains widely unknown to audiences and singers alike. Its publication in the post-World War I period may have contributed to its relative neglect, as musical style shifted away from the tonal, late-Romantic idiom in which the work is based; however, it is still unclear whether this is the only reason this piece is so underperformed.

Somervell's approach to the cycle is unique; rather than setting a single, unified Browning collection, he constructs his own narrative thread by shaping a cycle from multiple Browning sources. Somervell also presents his most mature compositional style in this cycle, and compared to his other works, which are sometimes accused of being overly conservative, *A*

[35] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Gordon Cox, ed., *Sir Arthur Somervell on Music Education: His Writings, Speeches and Letters*(Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003); Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005).

Broken Arc stands out as compelling and challenging for both pianist and singer. In efforts to bring the beautiful work to the public, it is the author's intention to perform this work on several recitals in the fall of 2026.

In addition to Somervell, several composers associated with early-twentieth-century English song warrant further investigation, including Charles Villiers Stanford, Sir Hubert Parry, and Frederick Keel. One of the gems among these is Keel's "Trade Winds" from *Three Salt-Water Ballads*, a work that appears occasionally in anthologies and is performed from time to time yet remains relatively unknown in many studio contexts. Furthermore, the larger set contains two additional songs, "Port of Many Ships" and "Mother Carey," which are equally excellent and pedagogically appropriate choices for many undergraduate singers. Collectively, these songs offer vivid sea imagery and a spirit of adventure, and they tend to be light, energetic, and immediately engaging, with accessible technical demands for college students. These songs can make substantial additions to a wide range of recital programs.

These additional composers and pieces are only a small part of the vast range of English art songs available to us, but they require voice teachers to expand their "go-to" repertoire to make them accessible to students and the broader vocal community. This requires extra effort from the teacher, but it opens the door to a wealth of wonderful repertoire for young singers.

It is my hope that this document encourages greater recognition of Arthur Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad* among singers and teachers alike and that it will be utilized more frequently in recital programs, juries, and auditions. The resource this document provides hopefully demonstrates the validity and pedagogical value of Somervell as an overlooked composer and, additionally, encourages the diversification of the music instructor's program for students.

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