Erin Ehliis, Soprano  
Senior Vocal Recital  
December 12th, 2020

Sweeter than Roses  
Henry Purcell

“Sweeter than Roses” may be one of the most well known Baroque vocal pieces. Written for Richard Norton’s tragic play, “Pausanius”, the piece was composed as a song of seduction, and if often confused for a sweet, pleasant piece.

The Babe  
John Duke

The English poet, Kathleen E. Carpenter wrote the poem “The Babe”, describing that among the frenzy and chaos of mankind, greedy and prideful, is the Babe, tiny and perfect. One may take this as the interpretation of the innocence of children, or maybe little Baby Jesus underneath the loving shadow of his parents.

Hello! Oh Margaret, it’s you  
Gian Carlo Menotti

Also known as “Lucy’s Aria”, “Hello! Oh Margaret, it’s you” from the opera The Telephone (1947) is sung by Lucy while she is talking to her friend Margaret on her brand new phone that she received from her boyfriend Ben, who is trying to propose. Over the opera, Lucy becomes obsessed with the phone, turning Ben to try to even cut the cord. His question goes unsaid until the very end of the opera, when he phones Lucy and asks for her hand, as he can get to her no other way.
Barber put Rainer Maria Rilke’s “Poèmes français” to music starting in 1950. He originally took the first (“Puisque tout passe”), fourth (“Le clocher chante”), and fifth (Départ) poems and arranged them for the American soprano Eileen Farrell to sing in Washington D.C., with Barber at the piano. Barber then arranged the second (Un cygne) and third (Tombeau dans un parc) for the French baritone Pierre Bernac, this time with Francis Poulenc at the piano. The two Frenchmen premiered the full cycle in Paris in February of 1952.

Knowing that this cycle was written for two drastically different voices and performers is important when listening to (and learning) this cycle. Being written for a soprano with a massive and extremely capable voice, the first, fourth, and fifth pieces are much more lively and upbeat with a flowing, somewhat repeating piano part. These pieces are vocalist-focused, with the piano acting only as accompaniment. The second and third pieces, however, were written for a master of French art song and strong baritone. These pieces sigh and are weighed down with emotion, which Bernac would have portrayed flawlessly.

I. Puisque tout passe
(Since All Things Pass)

Since all things pass,
Let us make a passing melody;
The one that quenches our thirst
Shall be the right one for us.

That which leaves us, let us sing
With love and art
Let us be swifter
Than the swift departure.

II. Un cygne
(A Swan)

A swan moves across the water,
Completely surrounded by itself,
Like a gliding painting;
Thus, at certain moment
A being that one loves
Is a whole moving space.

It draws near, duplicated,
Like the swimming swan,
On our troubled soul...
Which to that being adds
To the trembling image
Of happiness and of doubt.
III. Tombeau dans un parc
(Tomb in a Park)

Dors au fond de l’allée, 
tendre enfant, sous la dalle, 
on fera le chant de l’été 
autour de ton intervalle.

At the end of the avenue, sleep, 
Tender child, beneath the stone, 
We shall sing the song of Summer 
About your grave.

Si une blanche colombe 
passait au vol là-haut, 
je n’offrirais à ton tombeau 
que son ombre qui tombe

If a white dove 
Passes in flight over head, 
I would offer to your tomb 
Only its falling shadow.

IV. Le clocher chante
(The Belltower Sings)

Mieux qu’une tour profane, 
je me chauffe pour mûrir mon carillon. 
Qu’il soit doux, qu’il soit bon 
aux Valaisannes.

Better than a secular tower, 
I am to ripen my carillon. 
May it be sweet, may it be good 
For the girls of Valais.

Chaque dimanche, ton par ton, 
je leur jette ma manne; 
qu’il soit bon, mon carillon, 
aux Valaisannes.

Every Sunday, tone by tone, 
I cast them my manna; 
May it be good, my carillon, 
For the Valais girls.

Qu’il soit doux, qu’il soit bon; 
samedi soir dans les channes 
tombe en gouttes mon carillon 
aux Valaisans des Valaisannes.

May it be sweet, may it be good; 
Into their beers on Saturday nights 
Drop by drop, my carillon falls 
For the boys and girls of the Valais.

V. Départ
(Departure)

Mon amie, il faut que je parte. 
Voulez-vous voir 
l’endroit sur la carte? 
C’est un point noir. 
En moi, si la chose 
bien me réussit, ce sera 
um point rose 
dans un vert pays.

My love, I must leave. 
Would you like to see 
The place on the map? 
It is a black point. 
In me, if things 
Go well for me, 
It will be a red point 
In a green land.
More commonly known in the US as its English translation, “The Shepherd on the Rock”, this piece was composed by Schubert in 1828, just days before his death at the age of 31. He used German poet Wilhelm Müller’s and the German playwright Helmina von Chézy’s combined text and created a piece specifically for soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann. Apart from voice and piano, this piece was atypically joined by a solo clarinet.

Wenn auf dem höchsten Fels ich steh',
In's tiefe Tal hernieder seh',
Und singe,

Fern aus dem tiefen dunkeln Tal
Schwingt sich empor der Widerhall
Der Klüfte.

Je weiter meine Stimme dringt,
Je heller sie mir wieder klingt
Von unten.

Mein Liebchen wohnt so weit von mir,
Drum seh' ich mich so heiß nach ihr
Hinüber.

In tiefem Gram verzehr ich mich,
Mir ist die Freude hin,
Auf Erden mir die Hoffnung wich,
Ich hier so einsam bin.

So sehnd klang im Wald das Lied,
So sehnd klang es durch die Nacht,
Die Herzen es zum Himmel zieht
Mit wunderbarer Macht.

Der Frühling will kommen,
Der Frühling, meine Freud',
Nun mach' ich mich fertig
Zum Wandern bereit.

When I stand on the highest rock,
Look down into the deep valley
And sing.

From far away in the deep dark valley
The echo from the ravines
Rises up.

The further my voice carries,
The clearer it echoes back to me
From below.

My sweetheart lives so far from me,
Therefore, I long so to be with her
Over there.

Deep grief consumes me,
My joy has fled,
All earthly hope has vanished,
I am so lonely here.

The song rang out so longingly through the wood,
Rang out so longingly through the night,
That is draws hearts to heaven
With wondrous power.

Spring is coming,
Spring, my joy,
I shall now make ready to journey
Musique Anodine, No. III
Gioachino Rossini

The text of “Mi langerò tacendo” has been set to music numerous times by different composers. In Rossini’s musical translation, he pokes and prods fun at the ever-famous extravagant aria, creating bold and beautiful lines.

Mi langerò tacendo,  
Della mia sorte amara;  
Ma ch’io non t’ami  
O cara  
Non lo sperar da me.  
Cruel! In che t’offesi?  
Cruel! Farmi penar, perché?  
Cruel! Ah!

I shall mourn in silence  
My unhappy fate;  
But do not hope,  
My love,  
That I should stop loving you.  
Cruel one! How did I offend you?  
Cruel one! Why do you make me suffer?  
Cruel one! Ah!

Chi sa, chi sa, qual sia  
W.A. Mozart

This aria, in which the faithful Madame Lucilla ponders on the acidity of her suitor, was inserted into the opera Il burbero di boun cuore (The Goodhearted Churl) by Madame Villeneuve, a soprano of the 18th century. Il burbero was composed by Vicente Martín y Soler, libretti by Lorenzo da Ponte, and premiered in Austria in 1786. Mozart, however, wrote “Chi sa, chi sa, qual sia” in 1789 specifically to add to the opera in hopes that it would gain popularity.

Chi sa, chi sa, qual sia  
l’affanno del mio bene,  
se sdegno, gelosia,  
timor, sospetto, amor.  
Voi che sapete, o Dei,  
I puri affetti miei,  
Voi questo dubbio amaro  
Toglietemi dal cor.

Who knows what it is  
That troubles my beloved?  
Is it anger, jealousy,  
Fear, doubt, or love?  
You, oh gods, who know  
The purity of my love,  
Oh gods, take this bitter  
Uncertainty away from my heart.

*All translations were taken from ipasource.com