

"Spesso per entro al petto"
Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)

Barbara Strozzi was a Baroque era composer born in Venice, Italy. She was fathered by Giulio Strozzi, who was both a poet and librettist. He encouraged her gifts of performing and composing from a young age, sending her to study composition with Francesco Cavalli. The Strozzi estate housed the *Accademia degli Unisoni*, or group of like-minded thinkers. It was here that she showcased her compositions for the public, singing and accompanying herself on lute. Unlike many female composers, she had her work published during her lifetime. These works consist of secular arias, madrigals, and cantatas, spanning eight volumes. She died in 1677 and continues to be considered one of the most prolific composers of secular music in Italy's 17th century.

"Spesso per entro al petto" (1651) is characteristic of Strozzi's style, containing virtuosic lines for the voice and intimate treatment of the text. The singer laments their emotions as they reflect upon the beautiful Clori. He cannot define his feelings but considers the option of love in a sarcastic manner, going as far as to call it a sickness. Strozzi, unlike her fellow female composers, published under her own name. Society considered female composers to have poor morals. To combat this, she dedicated this piece to royalty "...so that, under an oak of gold it may rest secure against the lightning bolts of slander prepared for it."

Often a little something
passes into my heart
And I cannot say if it is pain
or delight
I feel like I am dying
from an unknown force.
How laughable it would be
If this were the sickness of love.

When the beautiful siren Clori
presents herself to me
A fire grows within my breast which both
delights
and torments me

I feel my heart divided
between ice and fire.
How laughable it would be
If this were the sickness of love.

I willingly would search out
the most terrible horrors,
but I hear my thought saying
where is Clori?
Who can say exactly what
this madness means?
How laughable it would be
If this were the sickness of love.

"Ihr Bildnis"
Clara Schumann (1819-1896)
Poet: Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

Romantic era composer, Clara Schumann, was born in Leipzig, Germany. She began studying the piano at a young age with her father, Frederick Wieck. After attaining fame throughout Europe as a prodigy by 11, she was encouraged to study composition in the major cities of Germany. She met her future husband, Robert, when he was studying piano with her father. After a lengthy legal battle, they were married. Until this point, she had performed her own compositions, but marriage diminished her confidence in her own abilities. She didn't want

to neglect her role as a mother and wife, so she composed and performed less. It wasn't until Robert's death in 1856 that she returned to performing frequently, although this repertoire consisted mainly of his work. Johannes Brahms befriended the Schumanns in 1853 and helped her through Robert's death. Clara died in 1896, five years after her final public concert. While many of her works were never published, she contributed to modernizing piano playing technique and edited several works by her husband for publication.

"Ihr Bildnis"(1840) is one of her eighteen published lieder, telling the tragic story of losing a loved one. Schumann experienced loss when her eighth child died during infancy. She emphasizes the last line of text with an unresolved vocal line. The continuous eighth notes in the bass line drive the piece forward, only changing after the vocal line has ended. Her use of unconventional harmonies in the piano is typical of the romantic era, but her chord progressions move melodically, highlighting her skill and understanding of the piano.

I stood in dark daydreams
And gazed at her picture
And that beloved face
Began to come slowly to life.

Around her lips played
A wondrous laughing smile
And tears of sorrow
Glistened in her fair eyes.

My tears also, flowed
Down my cheeks
And ah! I cannot believe
That I have lost you!

"Frühling"

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847)

Poet: Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857)

Born into a cultured family of musicians, Fanny Mendelssohn grew up with her brother, Felix, in Hamburg, Germany. Here, Fanny excelled at piano playing and would have gone on to do so professionally had it not been for societal limitations. The opportunity to perform and showcase her work came when her brother restored himself as the host of a musical salon in 1831. Two years prior, she married a famous painter, Wilhelm Hensel, and took on the role as a wife. She continued to compose during her marriage, writing about 500 pieces including lieder, piano works, chamber music, cantatas, and oratorios. While her and her brother were seen as competitors by the public, they sought counsel with one another for feedback and advice on compositions. Her death in 1847 is believed to have contributed to her brother's untimely death six months later.

"Frühling" comes from a text by Joseph von Eichendorff. In his typical poetic style, the text is set in nature around spring time, and discusses the topic of love. This sense of wanderlust and excited for the prospect of love can be heard in the stepwise sextuplet of the piano

accompaniment. Mendelssohn exhibits her understanding of the text by utilizing non-chord tones to accentuate words such as “love” and “miracles” in the second stanza.

Above the garden through the breezes
I heard the birds of passage fly,
That means spring scents soon will come
Everything is starting to blossom.

I want to shout, I want to weep.
This must be spring, this must be love!
All miracles return again
With the light of the moon.

And the moon and stars proclaim it,
And the dreaming wood murmurs,
And the nightingales sing:
She is yours, yes, she is yours!

“Cantique”

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Poet: Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949)

Nadia Boulanger was born into a musically successful family in 1887. Her father, Ernest Boulanger, taught voice at the Paris Conservatoire, where she began her studies at the age of ten. One of her most notable teachers was Gabriel Fauré, who taught her composition. She had won every award the Conservatoire had to offer, and even took second place in the Prix de Rome in 1908 with her cantata, *La Sirène*. Her sister, Lili, would go on to be the first female to win this award. After Lili’s death, Nadia halted her composing career and devoted herself to teaching and conducting. She taught composers such as Aaron Copland and Philip Glass, as well as paved the way for performances of Baroque and Renaissance French music. Boulanger lived to be 92 and died in her hometown. She lives on in the hearts of several composers as one of the most influential teachers of music for the 20th century.

“Cantique” (1909) is set to text by poet Maurice Maeterlinck, discussing love as a pure feeling without sin. The calm nature of the text is furthered by the simplistic and repetitive rhythm in the piano. It only diverts from straight quarter notes when the text reads “Its tears will find me and not go astray.” While the rhythm is straightforward, the harmonies utilize non-chord tones and cluster chords to highlight words such as “stars” and “grace.”

To all weeping souls,
to all sin to pass,
I open in the midst of the stars
my hands full of grace.

No sin lives
where love speaks.
No soul dies
where love weeps.

And if love gets lost
on the paths of the earth,
Its tears will find me
and not go astray.

“Le Couteau”

Poet: Camille Mauclair (1872-1944)

“Le Couteau” (1922) is one of the few pieces Boulanger published after the death of her sister. The lyrics liken the feeling of heartbreak to that of a knife in the heart. Her own feelings of despair and hopelessness after losing Lili are believed to be the driving force behind this composition. The unusual harmonies in the piano not only demonstrate her understanding of the instrument, but her progressive use of non-chord tones and unconventional voice leading. The uncertainty of chord resolution highlights the protagonist’s unwillingness to forget his love.

I have a knife in my heart
My lover, my lover put it there
I have a knife in my heart
And it cannot be pulled out.

Only a kiss can heal it,
My lover, my lover put it there
A kiss on my heart
But he will not give it.

This knife is the knife of love
My lover, my lover put it there
All my heart will be taken
With all my sorrow.

Knife, stay in my heart
Since my lover put you there!
I want to die of love for her
But I do not want to forget her.

“À Trianon”

Augusta Holmès (1847-1903)

Augusta Holmès is considered a French composer, although her lineage is Irish. She was born in Paris in 1847 and later brought to Versailles to receive a better education. Here, she grew up studying music with cathedral organists and socializing with other musicians and poets. Holmès served as a nurse during the Franco-Prussian War and gained French citizenship shortly after. Her studies were furthered in 1875, when she joined César Franck’s group of composition students. These teachings, along with the influence of Wagner, shaped her compositional style. Up until this point, she had written mostly songs, but slowly transitioned to larger works including operas, orchestral, and choral works. One of these works for choir and orchestra was premiered at the Paris Exposition of 1889. She composed and wrote poetry up until the year of her death in 1903.

“À Trianon” (1896) is one of Holmès’ 130 composed songs. She wrote both the music and the text as a parody of 18th century French music. This can be heard in both the vocal and piano lines with grace notes and sixteenth note embellishments. The text most likely refers to the

Petit Trianon, a house outside the main building at the Palace of Versailles. Queen Marie Antoinette and her court would come here to play out living the life of a peasant. Holmès' text builds in anticipation at the third stanza, and the music follows suite by changing to the relative minor. The original key returns for the last stanza as the protagonist encourages Marquise to give in to his love.

Follow me, Marquise,
Among the perfumed breeze,
Toward the Temple of Love
That smiles on us with the day's last rays,

Follow me, Shepherdess,
Among the mosses and the ferns,
And the blossoming flowers beneath your feet
Will say: "Love, the mother
Is more hard
And Flora has less feminine charms!"

Come under the rosy hawthorn
Less red than your budding lips!
Permit me at last to rest
My head very close to your heart!

Your bosom beats faster
In vain you avoid my eyes
Your delicate hand is too small
To hide our blushes!

Come then, Marquise!
Together let us savor this exquisite hour
For Love has conquered you
And it is the end of the day!

"There are fairies at the bottom of our garden"
Liza Lehmann (1862-1918)
Rose Fyleman (1877-1957)

Liza Lehmann is considered an English composer and vocalist. She grew up living in Germany, Italy, and France with parents who were both artists themselves. Her education began in London where she studied voice with Alberto Randegger and Jenny Lind. After gaining acclaim as a soprano voice, she spent nine years traveling Europe and the United States as a recitalist, since her voice wasn't quite big enough to hold her own in opera. Clara Schumann was a large supporter of Lehmann's career as a performer. After her marriage to Herbert Bedford, a

painter and composer, she moved away from the stage and began composing. She died of cancer at the age of 56, shortly after finishing her memoirs.

“There are fairies at the bottom of our garden” (1917) is one of Lehmann’s most well-known songs. She wrote several songs for children, some more satiric than serious. This piece is sometimes performed seriously, and other times interpreted as a caricature of childish fantasies. Regardless of portrayal, the text is heightened by the slight melodic variations between each verse.

“Ah, Love, but a day!”

Amy Marcy Chenery Beach (1867-1944)

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Amy Beach was born into a wealthy family in 1867. They moved from her hometown of Henniker, New Hampshire to Boston when she was eight years old. By the time they had gotten to Boston, Beach had memorized over forty songs on piano and composed simple hymns and waltzes. Noticing her talent, her mother encouraged her to study piano, but Amy preferred to be self-taught. This allowed her to experiment with classical forms and create her own style. She did receive formal training from Junius W. Hill in counterpoint and harmonies for a year. Until her marriage to Dr. Henry Beach, who discouraged her public performances, she enjoyed a career of traveling and composing. He supported her interests in music and encouraged personal study of composition to retain her creativity. His death in 1910 led to her continuation of her performance career. World War II forced her to move back to the United States permanently. Here, she lived out the rest of her life in New York and died of a heart disease in 1944.

“Ah, Love, but a day!” is the second in a set of three songs from *3 Browning Songs, Op.44*, set to poetry by Robert Browning. Browning’s poetry often contains darker themes and provides social analysis through analogies. The line “Wilt thou change too,” takes the changing political climate and compares it to his love. The protagonist is hoping that it would not change as the world drastically was. His work is often hailed as the beginning of social discourse in Britain and the United States during the 1880s.