Words and Music

Words and Music

Edited by

Victor Kennedy and Michelle Gadpaille

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

Words and Music
Edited by Victor Kennedy and Michelle Gadpaille

This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4916-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4916-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part IV: **Using Words and Music to Teach English as a Second Language**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to thank the contributors for their insights into different aspects of the relationship between words and music. The chapters in this book grew from a conference entitled *Words and Music* held at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor in December 2011. There are many different perspectives represented here, with contributions from musicians, linguists, literary scholars and language teachers.

Words and Music was as much a festival as a conference, featuring performances by students of the Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor, organized by Cveto Kobal and Zarko Ignjatovič. There was also vocal and instrumental accompaniment in all three of the keynote talks, as well as some of the panel discussions, a dance performance at one intermission (thanks to Amy Kennedy and Matic Ačko) and as a grand finale, a night at the opera.

The editors would like to acknowledge the support of the research project *Medkulturne literarnovedne študije* (International Literary Studies, ARRS No. P6-0265) in the preparation of this manuscript.

We would also like to thank the Dean of the Faculty, Prof. dr. Marko Jesenšek, and the Faculty Secretary, Mladen Kraljič, for their help and support without which the conference could not have taken place. Thanks also to Marko Benčak for help formatting the manuscript, and last but certainly not least, we are especially grateful for the unflagging organizational efforts of Tjaša Mohar.

We would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of our colleague and friend Darja Hribar.

INTRODUCTION

VICTOR KENNEDY AND MICHELLE GADPAILLE

Most people appreciate music, whether or not they can sing or play an instrument, and the kind of music most enjoy is the kind that has words attached, especially familiar ones. When words meet music, a special transaction occurs between rhythmic, harmonic and verbal signification. The chapters in this book explore the word-music affinity from varied viewpoints. What is the nature of this relationship between words and music? Since many contributors here come from the field of language research, the emphasis inevitably falls more on the words than on the music. All the studies here nevertheless testify to a layering of both aesthetic experience and meaning for the reader/listener when the given genre marries music to words. Music is never merely the aesthetic excess to lyrics, nor is the libretto an appendix to melody. Some authors, such as Simon Robinson, explore the relationship between words and music in classical music and opera. Robinson, a conductor and university professor of music, asks the question "What Do Words Express That Music Cannot?" and concludes that words best express ideas, while music best expresses emotion.

For many music lovers, nothing says emotion like opera. From comedy to tragedy, opera scales the heights and plumbs the depths of human emotion with harrowing plots and lovers' deaths set to soaring overtures and arias. Moreover, opera marks the moment when music and dance come together with words, the libretto. For many of us, however, opera is sung in a foreign language. What gets lost in such translation? Tomaž Onič gives us an answer in "Germont's Aria from *La Traviata*: Between the Original and the Slovene Translation." With so much variation in the verbal signification, the commonly held meaning of opera must then be highly reliant on the music itself. Great thinkers from Carl Jung and Roland Barthes to Northrop Frye have argued that all of the arts are built upon the foundation of ancient myths. The pattern is so pervasive that, not limiting ourselves to ancient myths, we continue to explain the world we live in by creating new mythologies. Katarzyna Nowak explores this concept in "Melancholic Opera: Representations of Immigrants in Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* and *Manon Lescaut*." Nowak calls

opera's reliance on both verbal drama and music an "age-old dilemma" and cites both Salieri and Strauss in the discussion of the primacy of music over words. Historically, according to Nowak, the libretti of opera have come off badly in the argument, with the musical element dominating. Her chapter aims to restore some balance with this exploration of trans-continental assumptions in Puccini's opera.

Not everyone loves opera but everybody likes a good tune, according to Monty Python's Mr. Mousebender, with a dash of spectacle added for good measure. The twentieth-century genre of the musical united earlier popular forms, such as vaudeville and variety shows, to create a unique stage genre that ultimately made the transition to the screen. F. Zeynep Bilge explores the relationship between popular and high culture, Broadway and the Globe Theatre, and America and England, in "'Brush up your Shakespeare': the Bard on Broadway." Here verbal signification, especially word play, situates the musical in the social and political world of the mid-20th century. Her analysis shows that, in this musical at least, "semantic surplus" (Nowak) is not the inevitable product of a meeting between words and music.

Several scholars explore the relationship between music and song lyrics in popular genres including blues and rock. Kristina Kočan Šalamon provides an analysis of some of the major themes of blues music in "Sadness, Superstition and Sexuality in Blues Poetry." Her analysis also traces blues from its origins in slave field-songs, through its flourishing as a space of difference (as Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls it), to its integration into African-American poetry. Agata Križan offers a detailed linguistic appraisal of song lyrics from the hit chart in "Getting the Message Across: Attitudinal Analysis of the Popular Songs 'Like Toy Soldiers' and 'Toy Soldiers'." Diogo André Barbosa Martins gives a psychological analysis of one of the best known figures in popular music today in "*Thank U Terror*: Musical and Lyrical Neuralgias by Alanis Morissette." Martins tackles the composite genre of the music video, attempting to decode gesture and facial expression alongside lyrics and music. In the process, he reveals Morissette's extension of the role of singer-songwriter in a complex, post-modern world. Katja Plemenitaš addresses the genre of Indie Rock, with "The Complexity of Lyrics in Indie Rock: The Example of Mumford & Sons." Like Bilge on the subject of musicals, Plemenitaš uses cultural and literary knowledge to deepen the listener's appreciation of intertextuality. In the sometimes shallow realms of rock lyrics, it could come as a surprise when Mumford & Sons "sample" *King Lear* or nineteenth-century hymnals.

A discussion of the relationship between words and music would not be complete without a consideration of rap music. Nada Šabec provides a sociolinguistic analysis of cultural influence extended by American rap music over its Slovenian counterpart in "The Influence of English on Slovene Rap Lyrics." This scholarly study indicates both the pervasive English invasion of a global music phenomenon and the sturdy cultural and linguistic basilect that continues to express Slovene values in this new form. On the same topic, Barbara Majcenovič Kline takes us deep inside the lyrics of individual rappers in "2pac or 6Pack: Slovene Gangsta Rap from a Sociolinguistic Perspective." Both authors reveal the potential of rap for social critique in difficult economic times.

Historically, songs have often been a vehicle for critique and protest. Erin McCoy explores the politics of music in "'National Advisory: Explicit Lyrics': Considering Censorship of Anti-Vietnam War Era Songs." Today our memory of the Vietnam War era is almost entirely one of protest; it is easy to forget how slowly the anti-war consensus was forged and how steadily those in power refused to acknowledge it. McCoy's account of television censorship and of courageous resistance on the part of certain American singers and TV personalities recalls a moment when the scales were tipping in the fight for greater freedom of anti-war expression. The lyrics of Pete Seeger's "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" aptly and ironically evoke the obfuscation that surrounded official versions of military events at the time.

In a more contemporary frame, Saša Vekić explores a similarly fraught issue: the place of Muslim youth in the uneasy America of post 9/11. Religion, culture and music meet in "Michael Muhammad Knight's *Taqwacores*: Fiction Versus Reality in a Subculture's Popular Music." Vekić convinces us that punk can be a liberating force for those seeking multi-hyphenated identities (such as Islamo-feminist or bisexual-Pathan-anti-WTO) and that its subversiveness can be a positive force. Certainly, Knight's novel will resonate with most youth subcultures. Victor Kennedy's contribution, "Very Like a Whale: The Paradox of Postmodern Pop," takes a theoretical approach to the phenomenon of borrowing, sampling and re-recording in the music industry. Kennedy asks us to consider these ubiquitous acts as a feature of the postmodern condition, where they can be creative tribute rather than copyright infringement.

On the topic of the use of music in other genres, Borut Jurišič presents an analysis of "Computer Game Soundtracks and Lyrics as Part of Gameplay." The melodies, lyrics and odd sound effects of computer games function as background for most users; Jurišič rescues such sound from the edges of our perception and foregrounds its role for the game

player. Maja Schreiner analyzes the use of music in a children's novel and its film adaptation, in "Music in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*." Gaiman is better known for his fusion of words with image, as in the *Sandman* graphic novels, but Schreiner's close reading of the minimalist lyrics of the mouse songs shows the author's ability to embody psychic quest in the meter and rhythm of seemingly simplistic nursery rhymes.

Two of the chapters here are written by language teachers and present a lively discussion of the benefits of using music and songs to help teach English as a foreign language. Tadej Braček writes about "Pop Lyrics for Grammar Teaching in a Primary Classroom." Making use of the internet's easy access to music videos, Braček establishes the pedagogical potential of popular ballads and even rap lyrics. It appears that music can engage even bored students in the intricacies of forming conditional sentences, while introducing basic concepts of literary analysis that can later be applied to standard poetry. At a more advanced level of language learning, there arises the need to understand the culture behind the language; Kirsten Hempkin talks about using "Scottish and Slovene Songs in the Intercultural Classroom." This innovative, cross-cultural approach works through rather than against stereotype to construct a basis for students to explore personal, national and ethical identities in the contemporary EU setting. Both contributions harness the motivational value of music to redirect attention to words; neither syntax nor stereotype is an easy classroom subject, but music brings each closer to students.

The common thread running through the chapters of this book is that combining music with words enhances the effectiveness of the message. The ancient Greek and Roman orators knew that a compelling argument appeals to the heart as well as the head, and nothing appeals to the heart like music. Combine words with music and you can have a love song, the anthem for a revolution, and all points in between.

But what of the relationship between words and music? What is the difference between a poem and a song lyric? Song lyrics use the same elements as poems, including imagery, symbolism, metaphor, sound effects like rhyme and rhythm, character, setting and plot. Many great poems, like those by Robert Burns and William Blake, have been set to music, while some song lyrics can stand on their own when read on the printed page. How does music add the effect of emotion? Northrop Frye's comparative analysis of different art forms gives us a clue:

> Some arts move in time, like music; others are presented in space, like painting. In both cases the organizing principle is recurrence, which is called rhythm when it is temporal, and pattern when it is spatial. Thus we speak of the rhythm of music and the pattern of painting; but later, to show

> off our sophistication, we may begin to speak of the rhythm of painting and the pattern of music. In other words, all arts may be conceived both temporally and spatially… Literature seems to be an intermediate between music and painting: its words form rhythms which approach a musical sequence of sounds at one of its boundaries, and form patterns which approach the hieroglyphic or pictorial image at the other (Frye 1963, 14).

The recurrence Frye describes in music, painting, and literature also applies to a combination of the forms, each reinforcing the other. Our look at the relationship between words and music provides insights that can be applied to other combinations as well. It is said that video killed the radio star and that movies and television have replaced reading; multimedia has changed from an educational fad to an elementary practice in the past several decades; and many conference presenters would be lost without their PowerPoints. The appeal to several senses at the same time is as seductive and persuasive in the 21st century as it was to the audience at the first ever opera performance in the 17th century.

References

Frye, Northrop. 1963. *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

PART I

OPERA AND MUSICALS

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT DO WORDS EXPRESS THAT MUSIC CANNOT?

SIMON ROBINSON

When I was asked to present a keynote talk at the Words and Music Conference on this topic, it seemed like an excellent idea. However, when I contemplated exploring similar ground in the form of an essay, I began to regret my folly. In deciding where to start to address the central relation of words to music, one cannot do better than to quote the words of Daniel Levitin, who runs the Laboratory for Music Perception, Cognition and Expertise at McGill University and holds the James McGill Chair in Psychology, while also being a neuroscientist and a former session musician and record producer. He says, "Music may be ***the*** activity that prepared our pre-human ancestors for speech communication and for the very cognitive, representational flexibility necessary to become humans."

In demonstrating the prowess of musical expression as opposed to mere words, it should suffice to play some music and allow the listeners to demonstrate this "representational flexibility" by responding appropriately. Some historical background, however, is necessary in order to explore the evolving interaction of voice with other sounds. Let us begin with the Latin word "viderunt" (*they have seen; they have observed/understood*) as it was used by the French composer Pérotin. This medieval composer was given a great new acoustical toy to play with at some point during the early 13th century: Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Pérotin proceeded to extend words in his music, most famously in the piece "Viderunt Omnes," by making them last for hundreds of sung seconds, thus giving them a new life and interpretation. Throughout most of this piece, in what is known as an organum, there is a steady pulse created by the dancing sound-patterns of the upper voices. This polyphonic sound, applied here to words from Psalm 98, seems to embody the psalmist's point about the confraternity of worship that results when the congregation makes "a joyful noise unto the Lord." Moreover, the

word *viderunt* emphasizes the concomitance of hearing and understanding. In this analgam of word and music, the single word "viderunt" is pronounced and sung in many different ways, each syllable drawn out and sung both in unison and by voices in harmony, a musical meditation.

Viderunt omnes fines terræ salutare Dei nostri. Jubilate Deo, omnis terra. Notum fecit Dominus salutare suum; ante conspectum gentium revelavit justitiam suam.	All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Rejoice in God, all the earth. The Lord hath made known his salvation; In the sight of the Gentiles He has revealed his justice.

A similar harmony is evident in a much later work, Jean Cocteau's *Oedipus Rex*, composed 700 years later, in Paris in 1927. Cocteau wrote the text for Stravinsky's "opera-oratorio" in French, basing it on *King Oedipus* by Sophocles. It was then translated into Latin by the Abbé Jean Daniélou. Stravinsky wanted Latin because of its monumental quality and because the distancing effect of the dead, ecclesiastical language would allow the audience to concentrate on the tragedy of the story (the hero unwittingly kills his own father and then unknowingly marries his mother), while excluding soap-opera titillation. To the same end, the chorus and actors are masked. To mediate between the drama and the audience, Cocteau introduced "Le Speaker," who appears in modern dress and explains the events, as they unfold, in ordinary language. Even an audience that understands neither French nor Latin can reach an understanding of the composer's construct of character through the music alone.

However, Stravinsky later wrote in his *Chroniqes de ma vie* (1935):

> I consider that music, by its very nature, is essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature… Expression has never been an inherent property of music.

In his *Dialogues and a Diary* (1963), Stravinsky gives us a clear insight into his compositional state of mind when he was creating *Symphony of Psalms* to celebrate the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 50th anniversary in 1930:

> The Allegro in Psalm 150 was inspired by a vision of Elijah's chariot climbing the Heavens; never before had I written anything quite so literal as the triplets for horns and piano to suggest the horses and chariots.

When I first came to Maribor about 33 years ago and started working as a conductor at the opera, one of the first operas I assisted with was Gounod's *Faust*. My new situation allowed me to compare how the libretto sounded in the original French version performed by the Chœur et orchestre du théâtre national de l'opéra de Paris, and a Slovene version performed by the Orchestra and Chorus of the Slovene National Theatre, Maribor. The juxtaposition is revealing in Valentin's heart-felt cavatina when he pours out his sorrow at having to go off to fight and leave his sister, Marguerite, undefended.

Despite obvious differences in sound quality and tempi, the inherent beauty of the music does not seem to be lost in either language. Following this theory, then, an English listener should be most satisfied with opera when it is sung in English. Certainly, the emotional power is communicated in that language, also. However, a good performance in a foreign language is more pleasing than a bad performance in one's own.

Thus, it appears that the *sound* we hear can mean something to us all, can communicate universally. Do we have, perhaps, a common denominator of reactions to the sounds we hear? Let's try it. I learned to read a poem in Japanese which my good friend Hideyuki Suzuki taught me: it took him about three rehearsals before he could stop the tears of laughter rolling down his face at my pronunciation and I actually earned a "Not bad."

Ono no Komachi

Yumeji ni wa
ashi mo yasumezu
kajoedomo
utsutsu ni hitome
mitsigoto wa arazu

Though I go to you
ceaselessly along dream paths,
the sum of those trysts
is less than a single glimpse
granted in the waking world.

Can a non-Japanese speaker tell from listening to the Japanese version what the poem was about? Or, from the written text, what it sounded like? It does appear that intonation can communicate, if not meaning, then at least feeling—although this is less certain across languages. When one tries reading the English translation out loud and focuses not so much on the meaning as on the intonation, one appreciates the translator's skill in replicating this conduit of feeling through lexis and sound effects.

To a musician, the sound of music has powerful effects. These are the words used by the composer Hector Berlioz to describe his reaction upon hearing Gluck's opera *Armide*:

> I closed my eyes, and whilst listening to the divine gavotte with its caressing melody and its softly murmuring monotonous harmony, and to

> the chorus, "Jamais dans ces beaux lieux," so exquisitely graceful in its expression of happiness, I seemed to be surrounded on all sides by enfolding arms, adorable intertwining feet, floating hair, shining eyes and intoxicating smiles. The flower of pleasure, gently stirred by the melodious breeze, expanded, and a concert of sounds, colours and perfumes poured forth from its ravishing corolla.

This certainly records a specific instance when sound evoked a complex set of sensory and emotional associations. The question arises, how far does this effect go? Can music have a programme? Can it, like a picture, tell a story? It was because of one particularly moving piece of music that I became a conductor. As a young boy I played violin and later trumpet in the Merseyside Youth Orchestra in my hometown, Liverpool. The guy who used to bang hell out of the timpani behind my head was a slightly older *wunderkind* by the name of Simon Rattle. Sir Simon Rattle is, as I am sure you all know, presently the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic. Well, at rehearsals one Sunday morning at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool in 1970 (I was about 13… he 16) he was rehearsing us all in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. This is music with a so-called programme (they've all done it at one time or another, Haydn's *Farewell* Symphony, Beethoven's *Pastoral* etc.), and Simon Rattle wanted to hear what it sounded like from the back of the Hall. Before he could finish the question "Who would like to conduct this so that…?" I had launched myself from my seat (doing serious and expensive damage to my instrument in the process) and trotted down to the podium. The rotter had closed the score, so I conducted the movement from memory. I was deeply moved by the experience, off my food for days, and told by my parents that I didn't have a nasty enough character to be a conductor!

To help define just what "program music" is, we can examine the difference between program music and "absolute" music. Program music attempts to convey an extra-musical narrative, often with the help of program notes, for example Felix Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave),* which is meant to elicit images of a rugged, sea-battered landscape in the remote Western Scottish isles*,* or Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231*, which is a musical description of a steam train. Absolute music, or abstract music, on the other hand is not intended to represent anything but itself, and usually entitled with a number (such as Robinson's 5^{th}).

In Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, the "March to the Scaffold" (how appropriate!) the artist, whose life is represented by the whole symphony, dreams that he has killed the woman he loves and that, condemned to death, he is led to the scaffold, where he attends his own execution.

Listening to the music without a program, the listener can imagine anything he or she wants; not knowing the story, it would be quite a coincidence if anyone were to imagine the scene described above. The drum roll might be a clue, but could imply many things besides a march to the scaffold.

Now I'd like to go into areas that I can only describe as dire straits or uncharted territory, the influence of poetic construction in music. Can we hear it? For this I have chosen a piece by Maurice Ravel (we're still in France) and the second movement of his *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello* which is based on the Malaysian poetic form and called Pantoum. Here's an example of the form of Pantoum stanzas:

Awe struck with this splendor
The sun sets on the Ocean
This makes my heart surrender
It causes me deep emotion.

The sun sets on the Ocean
As it shimmers on the waves
It causes me deep emotion
As it covers a thousand graves.

As it shimmers on the waves
It glows like a golden pearl
As it covers a thousand graves
Amidst the waves that swirl.

It glows like a golden pearl,
This makes my heart surrender
Amidst the waves that swirl
Awe struck with splendour.

It would take a very attentive listener, probably with the poem in front of him or her, to make the connection. A trained musician looking at the score and comparing it to the poem could, but very few could hear it on a first listen. Someone hearing the poem read for the first time, without it printed out in front of him/her, might not notice it either. As Victor Kennedy notes, there are structures in poetry that can be seen on the page, but not heard when the poem is read aloud, just as there are hidden structures in music (Kennedy 2013).

As early as 1912, Arnold Schönberg had introduced a new partnership between words and music in his *Pierrot Lunaire*, using spoken pitches or *sprechgesang.* In 1933 the Nazis dismissed him from his post as professor of composition at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin. From 1934 until his

death in 1951 he lived in Los Angeles. In 1942 he chose to set Lord Byron's "Ode to Napoleon" as a distanced condemnation of the events perpetrated by Hitler in Europe. In 1814 Byron had commented on his reasons for writing this ode: "I knew it was the moral duty of intelligentsia to take a stand against tyranny." Schönberg consciously sets the two objects, music and words, at opposite poles of conception, allowing the content or meaning of what is heard to become a very personal experience for each listener.

The American insurance salesman (and composer) Charles Ives captured his impressions of a specific place and time in 1906 with a stunning "sound picture," *Central Park in the Dark.* This is certainly one of the most personal and astute musical representations I have ever heard. Even an amateur concertgoer may be able listen to this piece and guess at the location and the time of day. To an uninitiated listener, the slow tempo and minor key could signify night. Ives's program notes to the original score, however, are much more detailed:

> This piece purports to be a picture-in-sounds of the sounds of nature and of happenings that men would hear some thirty or so years ago (before the combustion engine and radio monopolized the earth and air), when sitting on a bench in Central Park on a hot summer night.
>
> The strings represent the night sounds and silent darkness—interrupted by sounds from the Casino over the pond—of street singers coming up from the Circle singing, in spots, the tunes of those days—of some 'night owls' from Healy's whistling the latest of the Freshman March—the "occasional elevated," a street parade, or a "break-down" in the distance—of newsboys crying "uxtries" —of pianolas having a ragtime war in the apartment house "over the garden wall," a street car and a street band join in the chorus—a fire engine, a cab horse runs away, lands "over the fence and out," the wayfarers shout—again the darkness is heard—an echo over the pond—and we walk home.

This example shows that, while a composer might have had a certain scene in mind when he wrote the piece, a listener cannot recreate the same scene in her imagination, even though the emotional scenery may have been borne upon the music.

To conclude, as a tool for activation of specific thoughts, music is not as good as language. As a tool for arousing feelings and emotions, music is better than language. The combination of the two is the best courtship display of all. Let me try to illustrate this in my final sound bite, Sam Brown's Gilbert and Sullivanesque "Tea."

Oh how I love my tea
Tea in the afternoon
I can't do without it
And I think I'll have
Another cup very soon

Very evocative for a thirsty (English) audience!

Discography

Berlioz, Hector. *Symphonie fantastique op. 14*. Hamburg: Deutsche Grammaphon, 1997.
Brown, Sam. "Tea." *Stop!* London: A&M, 1988.
Gounod, Charles. *Faust*. Paris: EMI, 1986.
—. *Faust*. Ljubljana: TRS/SAZAS, 1983.
Ives, Charles. *Central Park in the Dark*. Hamburg: Polydor/Deutsche Grammaphon 1972-1986.
Perotin. "Viderunt Omnes." Hamburg: Polydor 1976.
Ravel, Maurice. *Trio pour piano, violon et violoncello*. Erato, 1974.
Schönberg, Arnold. *Ode to Napoleon, op. 41*. Hamburg: Deutsche Grammaphon, 1986.
Stravinsky, Igor. *Oedipus Rex*. London: EMI, 1993.
—. *Symphony of Psalms (Psalm 150)*. Hamburg: Deutsche Grammaphon, 1999.

References

Berlioz, Hector. 1990. *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz: Member of the French Institute, Including His Travels in Italy, Germany, Russia and England 1803-1865*. Translated by David Cairns. London: Cardinal (original text published 1838).
Ives, Charles. 1978. *Central Park in the Dark*. Edited by John Kirkpatrick. Hillsdale, New York: Mobart Music Publications (originally published 1906).
Kennedy, Victor. 2013. *Strange Brew: Metaphors of Magic and Science in Rock Music*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Stravinsky, Igor. 1935. *Chroniques de ma vie.* Paris: Denoël et Steele.
—. 1963. *Dialogues and a Diary*. Michigan: Doubleday.

CHAPTER TWO

GERMONT'S ARIA FROM *LA TRAVIATA*: BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL AND THE SLOVENE TRANSLATION

TOMAŽ ONIČ

The traditional purpose of translating opera librettos into Slovene from the mid-20th century was their vocal use; the translated text was learned by the singer instead of the original libretto and sung in the opera performance. With the trend to staging operas in their original language, as well as with the development of stage technology and the possibility of projecting surtitles on a screen above the stage, a new type of translation emerged. The former type to a large extent resembles literary translation and could, in fact, be viewed as such. Nevertheless, surtitle translation cannot completely avoid following some literary guidelines, or at least it should not. Apart from these two functions of libretto translation, primarily intended for public use in opera performances, there is a third type, which merely serves as translation into the communication language (in this case English) to ensure a close understanding of individual phrases or words and is mainly useful in analytical research of librettos and their translations.

Each of these functions requires particular translation norms and needs to follow certain translation techniques. Translating into a communication language, where the main purpose is to understand what exactly a line in an aria says, follows the principle of translating the content accurately. The primary technique applied is word-for-word or phrase-by-phrase translation. Stylistic features of the text are retained only to the extent of helping to convey nonverbal characteristics of the text. Aesthetic characteristics take a back seat to precise rendition of content. The practical need for this type of translation (which is by no means limited only to libretto translation) arose with the development of translation as a research discipline, where research papers include texts in more than one

language, while the research is conducted either in one of these languages or in a different one.

Similarly, translation for surtitles is primarily concerned with capturing the content of utterances, however, in somewhat less detail. The audience must understand the gist of what is being said (or sung) on stage but not necessarily every word; therefore, sensible paraphrasing with the purpose of economizing in terms of length is welcome. Apart from the technical limitations of the projected screen size, the translation should also be short enough not to become the centre of the audience's attention, nor to dominate their opera experience.

In opera libretto translation intended for vocal use, the translator faces restrictions that go far beyond merely transferring the content of a certain part of the libretto into the target language. Such libretto translations have much in common with poetry translation, since rhythm, line length (number of syllables) and rhyme need to be observed consistently. In this respect, libretto or song lyric translation is even stricter than translation of poetry; in the latter, the translator can afford to use a slightly changed rhythm or line arrangement, but this becomes impossible in cases where words depend on musical phrases. The challenge is particularly acute in the case of those parts of the libretto that form relatively closed units, like arias and duets, because words and music in these parts are particularly interconnected and compact. These considerations are evident in a parallel analysis of a Slovene translation of Germont's aria "Di Provenza il mar, il suol chi dal cor ti cancellò?" which was intended for vocal use and the original Italian lyrics from the same part of the libretto.

The author of the libretto for *La Traviata* was Francesco Maria Piave, Verdi's good friend and one of his most prolific librettists. It was during the period of their collaboration that Verdi started to have a considerable say in the structures of the librettos he was setting to music, even though his full involvement in co-writing librettos culminated in his artistic partnership with Arrigo Boito (Koter 1996, 8), who wrote the librettos for Verdi's last two operas, *Falstaff* and *Otello*. Piave provided ten librettos for Verdi, including for some of his best-known compositions like *Rigoletto*, *Ernani*, *Macbeth*, *I Due Foscari*, or *Forza del Destino*. He also wrote for other composers, but most of his fame stems from his cooperation with Verdi.

Germont's aria, one of the most famous of Verdi's baritone arias, is from the second act of *La Traviata*. Germont comes to Alfredo's country house to persuade him to return home. To heighten the dramatic effect, Verdi has Germont arrive just moments after Alfredo has read Violetta's letter telling him she has decided to return to Paris and thus to her former

life. Following this emotionally intense moment, Germont's aria brings a soothing calm to Alfredo as well as to the listener, functioning as a dramatic moment of retardation before the onset of the towering rage in which Alfredo rushes out the door, swearing vengeance.

The aria has two strophes that are musically almost identical. In the first, Germont reminds Alfredo of his native Provence, mentioning its soil and sun, then wonders what strange destiny tore him away from his family. Germont urges him to think of those past happy days, suggesting that, should he return home, all could once more be as it was. In the second, Germont focuses on his own grief and sadness because of his "prodigal son" and his immense joy if he were found again. Budden (1992, 148) suggests that what strengthens the nostalgic feeling of the lyrics are "small 'conjugations' of [Germont's] opening phrase... combined with the woodwind ritornello" that remind the listener of Verdi's predecessors Donizetti and Bellini, thus reviving a musical style of twenty years earlier.

The English version of the aria's lyrics below is a nearly word-for-word translation, closely following the original Italian lyrics to provide a detailed understanding. This will be needed for the upcoming contrastive analysis of the aria's stylistic and linguistic features that have an impact on its macrostructural image. The analysis will show that, even though a considerable number of stylistic elements have been discarded, replaced or compensated for, the Slovene version is a pleasantly fluent and in all respects successful translation. For the purpose of textual analysis, the original lyrics were taken from the full musical score of *La Traviata* (1990, 158-205).

1	Di Provenza il mar, il suol	Of Provence the sea and the soil
2	chi dal cor ti cancellò?	who from your heart has erased?
3	Al natio fulgente sol	From the native shining sun
4	qual destino ti furò?	what destiny has stolen you?
5	Oh, rammenta pur nel duol	Oh, think even in pain
6	ch'ivi gioia a te brillò;	that there joy was shining over you;
7	E che pace colà sol	And that peace only there
8	su te splendere ancor può.	on you again could glow.
9	Dio mi guidò!	God has guided me (here).
10	Ah! il tuo vecchio genitor	Ah, of your old parent
11	tu non sai quanto soffrì!	you know not the suffering
12	Te lontano, di squallor	You being far away, with grief
13	il suo tetto si coprì.	he was overcome (his head was covered).
14	Ma se alfin ti trovo ancor,	But if I should find you again

15	se in me speme non fallì,	and if I was not mistaken in my hopes,
16	Se la voce dell'onor	if the voice of honour
17	in te appien non ammutì	In you is not silenced
18	Dio m'esaudì!	Then God has heard me.

Considering the parallel musical composition of the two parts, it is no surprise that both stanzas follow the same metric structure: both are composed of eight trochaic tetrameter lines capped by a shorter, iambic dimeter line. Moreover, the similarity of form is strengthened by the rhyme scheme: in both stanzas a pair of interlocking rhymes connects the eight lines, while the last line rhymes with the penultimate one (abababab). All rhymes are masculine; this means the stress falls on the last syllable, which at the same time is the only one to rhyme. This leads to the observation that all the lines end in an imperfect trochee with the light syllable missing, which makes all the lines (except the last, which is iambic) catalectic. Even though the Italian language generally leans towards unstressed final syllables, strong endings are an appropriate choice in this aria. Ending a phrase with a stressed syllable and proceeding to the subsequent one that also opens with a stress creates a strong juxtaposition of two adjacent beats, which necessarily creates an obstacle in the otherwise smooth flow of the phrase and adds appropriately to the emotional gravity of the scene.

A glance at the musical score reveals that there are more than nine musical phrases in each part of the aria, because some lines of the lyrics are repeated. The first and the second couplets repeat, in both cases in reverse order, resulting in an anadiplotic or embracing structure (*Di Provenza il mar, il suol / chi dal cor ti cancellò / chi dal cor ti cancellò / di Provenza il mar, il suol*, etc.). Lines 5 and 6 are sung only once, but lines 7 and 8 are again repeated, this time in regular order. The concluding iambic line, however, appears twice more, thus closing the musical stanza. Counting all primary lines and recurrences, their total number amounts to 17 per stanza. It must be noted, however, that the structure in the second stanza is slightly varied: the recurring line of the lyrics, *te lontano, di squallor* (line 12), when repeated, is modified into *di squallore, di squallor*, and a coloratura is added in the conclusion.

If the libretto is translated for vocal use, this structure of 17 lines should remain unchanged because of its dependence on the music, as well as to support Verdi and Piave's characterization of Germont, whose regular forms of singing suggest a strong and firm character, in contrast to Violetta and Alfredo (Casini 1982, 155). The Slovene translator Niko Štritof followed the structure closely, but his translation is rather loose in

terms of content; in fact, it is really an adaptation. Save for the concluding coloratura, only two lines of the 34 repeat exactly; near recurrences are rare. Instead, a new line is provided for each musical phrase. The lyrics of the aria that were published in a collection of famous aria translations (Samec 1977, 130) are provided below. In the first column is the Italian original, including all repetitions in order as they appear in the opera score. Parallel to the original, in the central column, is the Slovene translation. The right-hand column is a close, word-for-word translation of the Slovene text into English, to enable a detailed comparison of the Italian and Slovene versions. The bold font marks words or phrases from the original that are retained in translation in terms of content. The English version has no bold highlights, since it serves only as an aid for closer understanding. Underlining suggests repetition of phrases within the Italian original and in one case within the Slovene translation. Shifts will receive further analysis in the next section of this chapter.

1 Di Provenza **il mar**, il suol	Mar **pozabil si** na dom,	Have you forgotten your home,
2 chi **dal cor ti cancellò?**	kraj mladostnih, srečnih dni,	the place of youthful, happy days,
3 Chi dal cor ti cancellò	tam, kjer **morje** se blesti	where the sea glitters
4 di Provenza il mar, il suol?	in zeleni gaj šumi?	and the green grove rustles?
5 Al natio fulgente sol	Sestra čaka tam na te,	Your sister waits for you there
6 qual destino ti furò?	muči težko jo gorje,	she suffers heavily,
7 Qual destino ti furò	joče majka za teboj	your mother cries for you
8 al natio fulgente sol?	in nesrečni oče tvoj.	and (so does) your unfortunate father.
9 Oh, rammenta pur nel duol	Kdo pretrgal je vezi,	Who has broken the ties
10 ch'ivi gioia a te brillò;	da nas nič več ne poznaš?	that you no longer know us?
11 E che pace colà sol	Mar smo tebi tujci mi,	Are we all strangers to you
12 su te splendere ancor può.	da besede nam ne daš?	that you offer us no word?
13 E che pace colà sol	Čuj me, ljubi sinko moj;	Hear me, my beloved son,
14 su te splendere ancor può.	zapuščen je domek tvoj!	your home is deserted!
15 Dio mi guidò!	Čuj njegov glas,	Hear its voice,
16 Dio mi guidò!	čuj doma glas,	hear your home's voice.
17 Dio mi guidò!	pojdi z menoj!	come with me.
18 **Ah! il tuo vecchio genitor**	Ah, odkar si šel od nas,	Ah, since you left us
19 **tu non sai quanto soffrì!**	sama žalost je doma,	nothing but grief is at home,

20 tu non sai quanto soffrì!	razoran je **moj obraz**	furrowed is my face
21 Ah! il tuo vecchio genitor	**in razguban od gorja**.	and wrinkled with sorrow.
22 **Te lontano, di squallor**	Noč in dan trpi srce,	Day and night my heart suffers,
23 **il suo tetto si coprì.**	brez solza so že oči ...	my eyes are tearless...
24 il suo tetto si coprì.	Ah, pretežko je gorje,	Ah, too heavy is this grief
25 di squallore, di squallor	kakor skala me teži.	It presses down like a rock.
26 Ma se alfin ti trovo ancor,	A če prideš k nam nazaj,	But if you come back to us,
27 se in me speme non fallì,	sama radost bo doma,	there will be only joy at home,
28 Se la voce dell'onor	in naš dom bo kakor raj	and our home will be like paradise
29 in te appien non ammutì	in sijal bo do neba.	and it will glow to the sky.
30 Ma se alfin ti trovo ancor,	in naš dom bo kakor raj	"
31 se in me speme non fallì,	in sijal bo do neba.	"
32 Dio m'esaudì!	Dobrotni bog,	Kind God,
33 Dio m'esaudì!	ah, daj nazaj	ah, give back
34 Dio m'esaudì!	nam prejšnji raj!	to us our former paradise!
35 Dio m'esaudì! Ma se alfin ti trovo ancor, ti trovo ancor. Dio m'esaudì! Dio m'esaudì!	Dobrotni bog! Dragi sinko moj, če prideš k nam nazaj, doma bo radost in bo raj!	Kind God! My dear son, if you come back to us, at home there will be joy and paradise!

A brief glance at both versions shows that most of the text has been altered to some extent in the process of translation. We notice both semantic and stylistic shifts. Most semantic shifts can technically be considered as mutations; all three subcategories are present in this translation: additions, deletions and radical changes of meaning. In the first two lines, the original libretto mentions the *sea* and the *soil* of Provence (*Di Provenza il **mar**, il **suol***), which in the translation is replaced by a more general concept of *home* (*Mar pozabil si na **dom***). Provence is never mentioned, this being an example of deletion, while lines 3-4, which in the original are merely a repetition of the first two, mention the glittering sea and the rustling green grove which replaces the soil. An addition appears in line 2 of the translation where Alfredo's home is called a *place of youthful, happy days* (*kraj mladostnih, srečnih dni*), which is not directly mentioned in the original.

In the remaining part of the first stanza (lines 5-17), the translation is relatively close to the overall spirit of the original aria; however, all individual lines show changes of meaning and/or additions. While lines 5-

6 of the original (repeated in 7-8) rhetorically ask about the fate that stole Alfredo from the native shining sun (*Al natio fulgente sol / qual destino ti furò?*), the translation introduces other family members, sister, mother and father, and reports on their grief over his departure (lines 5-8). While after this in the original libretto Germont switches to more positive rhetoric and diction, reminding his suffering son that those days were filled with joy (*ch'ivi gioia a te brillò*) and that he need not renounce the peace he once enjoyed (*E che pace colà sol / su te splendere ancor può*), the translation maintains the reproachful tone in which Germont hints that the ties between them have been broken (*Kdo pretrgal je vezi, / da nas nič več ne poznaš?*) and that Alfredo no longer speaks to the family, as if they were strangers to him (*Mar smo tebi tujci mi, / da besede nam ne daš?*) lines 9-12). He continues by directly addressing his son, asking him to return to his deserted home (lines 13-14 and 15-17). Meanwhile, the original libretto in lines 13-14 repeats the previous two lines mentioning peace and concludes the stanza with Germont's exclamation *God has guided me here* (*Dio mi guidò!*). Thus, as well as with two more repetitions of this line, Germont expands his indirectly expressed personal plea for Alfredo's return to Provence to a request of divine dimensions, exhibiting the features of prayer.

Semantically, the translation of the second stanza is to a certain extent closer to the original than the first one. The first two couplets of the translation (18-19 and 20-21) seem to appear in reverse order compared to the original, where the father begins the stanza by stressing his own suffering (*il tuo vecchio genitor / tu non sai quanto soffrì*, lines 18-19). After the repetition of these lines, he states the reason for this suffering, which is Alfredo's departure and his being far away from home (*te lontano*, line 22). Germont in the translation first speaks about Alfredo having left home (*Ah, odkar si šel od nas*) and then about the grief this caused. It should be noted that in the original, this is the first time Germont speaks of his own grief, since in the first stanza all his pleading is related to reviving the pleasant image of the domestic countryside and homey peace in Alfredo's mind. The translation, on the other hand, starts with the image of Alfredo being away from home (*ah, odkar si šel od nas*, line 18) and then proceeds to the consequences: sadness at home (*sama žalost je doma*) and his personal grief (*razoran je moj obraz / in razguban od gorja*). These had both been introduced to some extent in the previous stanza. Therefore, speaking of sadness at home in the translation, even though it is not mentioned in the original, seems internally coherent because of the previous introduction of other family members. In the original, however, Germont refers to his own sadness twice: once directly

(line 19) and once with a metaphor (line 23). In place of the recurring lines in the original, the translator contributes an addition of 4 lines (22-25), in which his description of grief is much more thorough than in the original. Germont elaborates on the consequences of this deed: his face is wrinkled with sadness, his heart suffers day and night and the trouble is too heavy for him, since it lies upon him like a rock.

In the remaining part of the stanza, a structural parallel can be observed. The conditional sentence from the original used by Germont addressing Alfredo is preserved in translation, but its form is slightly altered. In both cases, the content of the conditional phrase is essentially the same: if you return home, you will make your family very happy. In the original, there are three subordinate parts (lines 26, 27, 28+29) and two recurrences (30-31), climaxing in one main clause (32): *if I find you again; if I was not mistaken in my hopes; if the voice of honour in you is not silenced, then God has heard my prayers*. Two more recurrences of the main clause *Dio m'esaudì!* conclude the stanza (lines 33-34). In the translation, however, the structure is reversed. There is one subordinate part setting the condition *if you come back to us* (*če prideš k nam nazaj*, line 26) and three main clauses specifying three detailed consequences concerning the family's happiness at home: *there will be only joy at home*, *and our home will be like paradise*, *and it will glow to the sky* (*sama radost bo doma / in naš dom bo kakor raj / in sijal bo do neba*, lines 27-29). In terms of translation shift, this is specification, since all three thoughts are included in one from the original (*God has heard my prayers*). The concluding lines in the translation (32-34) contain Germont's apostrophe addressing God with a direct plea repeating the request he has just addressed to Alfredo, partly even in the same words, in the form of a conditional sentence.

Following the translation pattern of the whole aria in Slovene, the concluding coloratura is also translated relatively freely (line 35). While the Italian original merely re-uses lines 32 and 26 from the second stanza in the coloratura as closure to the aria (*Ma se alfin ti trovo ancor, Dio m'esaudì! Dio m'esaudì!*), the Slovene translation provides a new paraphrase of previously used lines. After the address *Dragi sinko moj*, line 26 is re-used (*če prideš k nam nazaj*) and then evolves in a new combination of lines 27 and 28: *doma bo radost in bo raj!*

The translation largely retains the proportion of figurative language, even though not in exactly the same places as in the original. The two rhetorical questions with which the original opens (lines 1-2 and 5-6) are replaced by one longer question in translation (lines 1-4), then two more are introduced later in lines 9-10 and 11-12. Some metaphors are left out: