

The Songs of Georgia Stitt
Hybridity: Art Song and Musical Theatre
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ABSTRACT

A resurgence of the American art song is underway. New art song composers such as Adam Guettel, Michael John LaChiusa, and Georgia Stitt are writing engaging and challenging songs that are contributing to this resurgence of art song among college students. College and University musical theatre programs are training performers to be versatile and successful crossover artists. Cross-training in voice is training a performer to be capable of singing many different genres of music effectively and efficiently, which in turn creates a hybrid performer. Cross-training and hybridity can also be applied to musical styles. Hybrid songs that combine musical theatre elements and classical art song elements can be used as an educational tool and create awareness in musical theatre students about the American art song genre and its origins, while fostering the need to learn about various styles of vocal repertoire.

American composers Leonard Bernstein and Ned Rorem influenced hybridity of classical and musical theatre genres by using their compositional knowledge of musicals and their classical studies to help create a new type of art song. In the past, academic institutions have been more accepting of composers whose careers began in classical music crossing between genres, rather than coming from a more popularized genre such as musical theatre into the classical world. Continued support in college vocal programs will only help the new hybrid form of American art song to thrive.

Trained as a classical pianist and having studied poetry and text setting, Georgia Stitt understands the song structure and poetry skills necessary to write a contemporary American art song. This document will examine several of Carol Kimball's "Component of Style" elements, explore other American composers who have created a hybrid art song form and discuss the implementation of curriculum to create versatile singers. The

study will focus on three of Georgia Stitt's art songs that fit this hybrid style and conclude with a discussion about the future of hybridity in American art song.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who believe in me and continue to lift me up.
I love you all: my husband: Erich, my best friend: Cindy, my ASU comrade: Charity, and
my soul sister: Cami.

And finally my reason for doing what I do, my heart and my strength:

My mother, Linda, who watches me from above.

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My heart is filled with gratitude for many people who have touched my life and put their faith in me. I always knew I wanted to make my career as a performer, but I had no idea that I could be a teacher and a great one.

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Thank you to all the teachers, students, performers, and composers who continue to push the boundaries. Long live musical theatre!

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CHAPTER 1

AMERICAN ART SONG AND HYBRIDITY

American art song is a tradition that began when our country was formed. The first American art song can be attributed to Francis Hopkinson. In 1759 he set “My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free” by Thomas Parnell to music. “As a young man he played the harpsichord and the organ; composed several pieces, and copied arias, songs, and instrumental pieces by several European composers.”¹ The influence of Hopkinson’s exposure to European music can be heard in his art song, “My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free.”

It took some time in America before composers embraced writing art song and most were not drawn to it because the money involved was not lucrative. “As the [early twentieth] century progressed, American composers found encouragement and opportunity in the form of fellowships, grants, competitions, and prizes.”² Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, Ned Rorem, and Leonard Bernstein are a small selection of American composers who were at the forefront of the progression of American art song. Barber, Copland and Ives used “elements of American folk and popular music in their works, giving them a nationalistic flavor.”³ Bernstein and Rorem were among the first to put their expertise of classical, jazz, pop, and musical theatre structure into a hybrid form. Both men led the way for a new group of composers to create a hybrid between musical theatre and the traditionally recognized European art song.

¹ “Francis Hopkinson,” The Society of the Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration

² Martha Elliot, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 278.

³ Elliot, *Singing in Style*, 279.

The influence of Bernstein and Rorem and their ability to break down barriers in music continues to inspire more recent art song composers to create an innovative mixing of genres and create a new style of art song. In the past 30 years, this has created a new trajectory of art song and has drastically changed its form. This generation includes composers such as Adam Guettel, Michael John LaChiusa, and Georgia Stitt. These composers use poetry that is colorful and witty, written by such authors as Dorothy Parker, Mary Elizabeth Frye and William Makepeace Thackeray whose texts allow the composers to create music that combines sophistication and wit with innovation.

Musical Theatre and Art Song Collide

Many of the “new generation” of composers studied not only well-known art song composers such as Schubert and Debussy, but their writing style was also influenced by musical theatre composers such as George Gershwin, Frank Loesser, Stephen Sondheim, and Richard Rodgers. Guettel, LaChiusa, and Stitt walk the line between hummable tunes and complexity that challenges even the most experienced singers. Vague boundaries in art song structure also began to challenge the audience. These three composers are exceptional because of their continued efforts to fuse traditional forms and harmonies with innovative ones.

Adam Guettel (b. 1965) is a composer who constantly blurs the lines between art song and musical theatre. He began his musical career in music at a young age performing as a boy soprano at The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, and Santa Fé Opera.⁴ His grandfather was Richard Rodgers, one of the most prominent 20th

⁴ Kelly Winters, “Adam Guettel Biography,” Musician Biographies, Accessed March 8, 2018, <http://www.musicanguide.com/biographies/1608004717/adam-guettel.html>

Century musical theatre composers, and his mother was composer Mary Rodgers. She encouraged her son to both play and compose music. Among his many musical skills, Guettel studied piano, guitar, bass fiddle, and electric bass.

Guettel's song cycle "Myths and Hymns," is based on music from an old hymnal that he bought in a used bookstore, combined with Greek mythology. "I used these dissimilar cosmologies as points of departure and discovered as I went along that they have a lot in common— a desire to transcend earthly bounds, to bond with something or someone greater, reflecting different parts of us: myths, our behaviors; the hymns, our prayers."⁵ Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* states, "Mr. Guettel's most fervent compositions, like 'Awaiting You,' a cry of spiritual yearning from the song cycle 'Myths and Hymns,' carry post-Wagnerian chromaticism into a realm that conjures late Mahler in its stretching of harmony to its outer limits."⁶ Holden speaks of Guettel's contribution to America's art song repertoire by saying, "To my mind this stylistic hybrid of European music and Americana is one of the most significant American songs in any genre written in the past quarter-century. Mr. Guettel lofted it heavenward."⁷ Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Samuel Barber, and Aaron Copland also influenced Guettel's style. He states, "[Copland] was one of the best theatre writers in the classical music business."⁸

⁵ Adam Guettel, *Myths and Hymns*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2002).

⁶ Stephen Holden, "A Peek at Works in Progress" review of *Adam Guettel at 54 Below*, 54 Below, New York. *New York Times*, February 21, 2013.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/arts/music/adam-guettel-at-54-below.html>

⁷ Holden, "A Peek at Works in Progress,".

⁸ Adam Guettel, "Adam Guettel Faces the Music: Will his musical win him mainstream audiences?," by David Savran, *Theatre Communications Group*, June 19, 2010,
<https://web.archive.org/web/20100619184739/http://tcg.org/publications/at/Jan04/guettel.cfm>.

Recently, when not composing, he has turned his attention to environmental conservation efforts with family-owned dairy farms in primarily New York and Vermont. Guettel seems to divide his time between these two foci: conservation and writing what he believes is meaningful music.

Michael John LaChiusa (b.1963) is a prolific theatre composer whose operas, musicals, and song cycles have premiered across the country. He taught himself piano at the age of seven, which prompted his mother to encourage him to pursue a career in music despite not having any formal training. Although he has not seen large commercial success, LaChiusa has served as composer-in-residence at Houston Grand Opera and Chicago Lyric Opera. He has written two Broadway shows, though neither was considered a success, and nine Off-Broadway shows. LaChiusa has always been vocal about his disdain for the commercial musical and he refuses to fit any mold. When speaking to Jonathan Frank of *Talkin' Broadway*, LaChiusa spoke about his compositional style. "I always think about the audience, but I won't cater to anybody. I have to please myself first [when writing music]."⁹ He continues to write interesting texts with complex music, making LaChiusa similar to Bernstein who also wrote some of his own texts.

One art song that LaChiusa has contributed to the hybrid form is "The Christian Thing to Do," which was included in a song cycle commissioned by the Carnegie Hall Corporation. It was performed by the crossover-artist Audra McDonald in 2004. *The Seven Deadly Sins: A Song Cycle* is a composite work comprised of seven songs written by seven different composers representing each sin. "Anger is represented by Michael John LaChiusa's 'The Christian Thing to Do'; envy by Ricky Ian Gordon's 'Can You Look

⁹ Michael John LaChiusa, "Cabaret," interview by Jonathan Frank, *Talkin' Broadway*, October, 1997, <https://www.talkinbroadway.com/cabaret/lachiusa.html>.

Me in the Eyes?'; gluttony by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens' 'I Eat'; greed by John Pizzarelli and Jessica Molaskey's 'The Greedy Tadpole'; lust by Steve Marzullo and Mark Campbell's 'Burning the Sauce'; sloth by Jeff Blumenkrantz's 'My Book'; and vanity by Jake Heggie's 'Blah, Blah, Me.'"¹⁰ The influences of George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Phillip Glass, and John Corigliano can be heard in his music.

Musical Theatre Crossover in Academia

The current job market is affecting the way students in higher education are being trained. There are now higher demands on singers due to the ever-changing market. According to a six-month study in *The Journal of Voice*, "more than half of auditions" requested material that required singing styles "outside traditional or classical voice technique."¹¹ Academic institutions are beginning to integrate voice training beyond classical styles equipping students with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the current music trends.

Among the changes being seen are opera companies performing more musicals and operettas in hopes of bringing in a new audience and, in turn, make more money. Musical theatre composers are writing for opera companies who support the advancement of sophisticated music with engaging storylines by commissioning works from hybrid composers such as Ricky Ian Gordon, Jake Heggie, and Michael John

¹⁰ "Audra McDonald Premieres *The Seven Deadly Sins* June 2 at Zankel Hall," News: U.S./Canada, Playbill, https://archive.is/20130104150401/http://www.playbill.com/news/article/86517-Audra_McDonald_Premieres_The_Seven_Deadly_Sins_June_2_at_Zankel_Hall.

¹¹ Kathryn Green, Warren Freeman, Matthew Edwards, and David Meyer, "Trends in Musical Theatre Voice: An Analysis of Audition Requirements for Singers," *Journal of Voice* 28, Issue 3 (May 2014): 324, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2013.10.007>.

LaChiusa. Houston Grand Opera commissioned the opera *The House Without a Christmas Tree*, by Ricky Ian Gordon. *It's a Wonderful Life* by Jake Heggie was “commissioned by Houston Grand Opera with San Francisco Opera and the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University”¹² and premiered December 2, 2016. In 2001, LaChiusa was commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago to write *Lovers and Friends (Chautauqua Variations)*. Gordon and Heggie have contributed many art songs that are being integrated into the standard repertoire of academic voice studios.

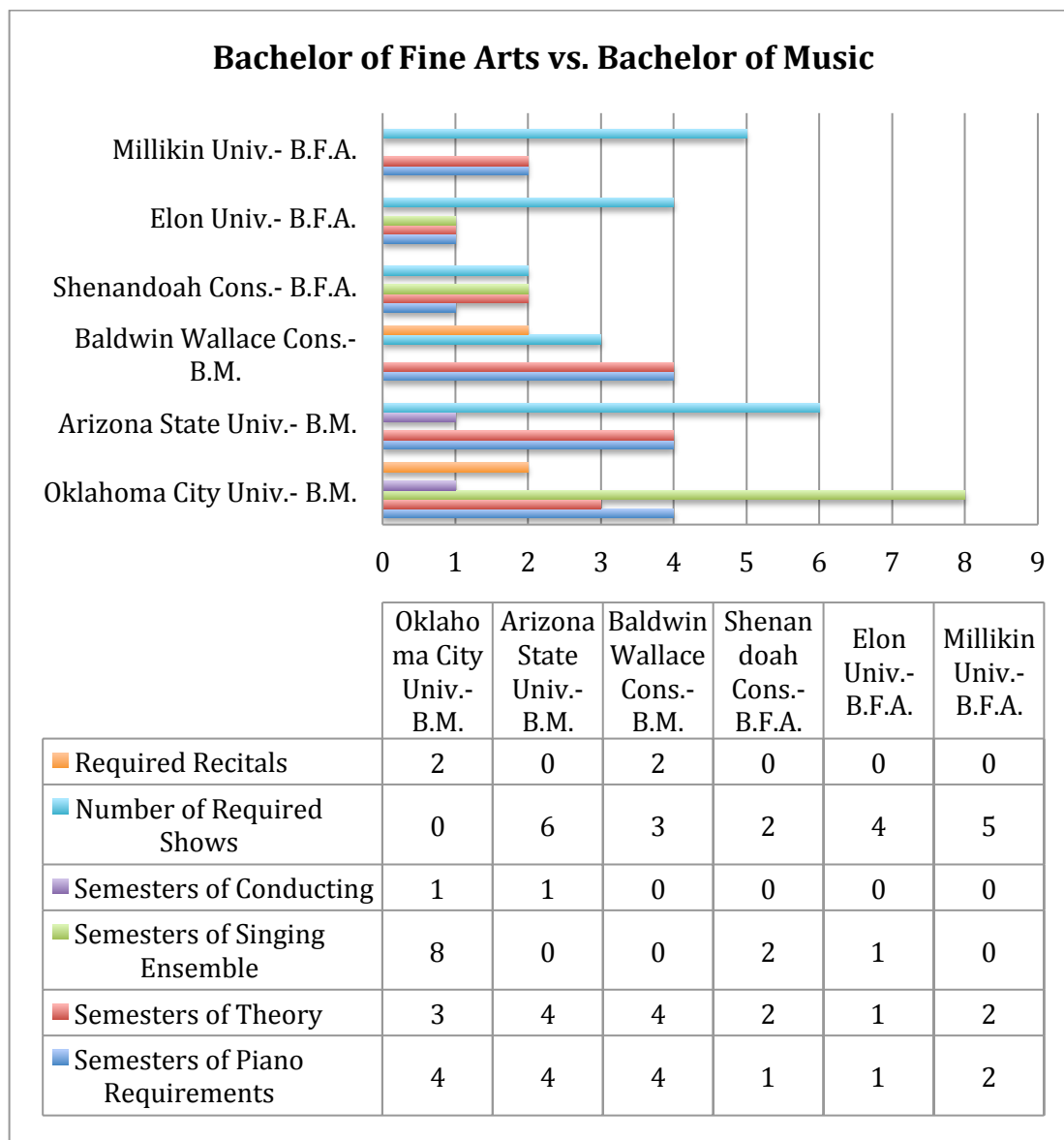
Neil Richardson has created a valuable website for music theatre performers called *Excavating the Song*. He is a Professor at Washington University and teaches an Introduction to Musical Theatre class. Many musicals written today demand a performer who has “[a] solid understanding of the mechanics of music and [has] the ability to translate notation into a performance.”¹³ Singers are required to have an expansive knowledge of vocal music and vocal styles when entering the professional world. Faculty members at academic musical theatre programs are structuring the requirements for graduation to aid in sending out successful artists in such a demanding profession. Colleges and universities have added, in the past 20 years, musical theatre degrees alongside vocal performance degrees to their programs. Progress is being made in the way we address the demands of our art and helping to prepare students for success in a professional performing career by narrowing the focus of degrees.

The following diagram lists three Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees and three Bachelor of Music degrees from conservatory and university programs for musical

¹² “It’s a Wonderful Life (2016),” Jake Heggie Composer & Pianist, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://jakeheggie.com/its-a-wonderful-life-2016/>.

¹³ “Expectations of Musical Theatre Singers,” Excavating the Song, accessed March 21, 2018, http://excavatingthesong.org/For_Education_Purposes_Only/Expectations_of_Musical_Theatre_Singers.html.

theatre. All information collected is based on the 2017-2018 catalog of classes for each school. Five of the schools listed are on several Top 10 lists for musical theatre degrees; the only one not listed is Arizona State University. Despite this, Arizona State University's musical theatre degree encourages crossover the most by integrating opera and music theatre students in all of their musical and opera productions.



Example 1.1 B.F.A vs. B.M. degrees in University and Conservatory Music Theatre programs

Seeing the growth in American academic musical theatre programs, and the transformation of degree programs as the music industry grows and changes, inspires hope for the future of collaborative ideas to exist.

The blending of musical theatre and art song enable a broader audience to be reached with this expanding art form. American art song has value in the vocal repertoire for all levels of performers. Kimball stated: "Until American art song is valued by performers and presenters as being musically and intellectually equal of that of other cultures, it is doubtful that American audiences will come to appreciate the music of their own culture in its many forms."¹⁴ The acceptance of a hybrid form of art song is at a precipice, and when we recognize its validity, we can then agree on a need to sustain and grow the form in America.

¹⁴ Kimball, Carol. "The Song File: Made in the U.S.A. - Thoughts on American Song." *Journal of Singing - the Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 67, no. 4 (03, 2011): 463-467. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/863388141?accountid=4485>.

CHAPTER 2

AMERICAN ART SONG TRADITION

Beginning in the 1990's musical theatre composers began to experiment with the art song form, which has caused the traditional definition of art song to be challenged. Art song, as a musical genre, has existed for hundreds of years. American art song has the distinction of being eclectic; Americans can trace their ancestries to every part of the world, and bring those cultures and musical influences into their music, uniquely coloring the sound. Thomas Hampson, an American baritone, wrote the foreword for *A Singer's Guide to American Art Song* by Victoria Etnier Villami stating, "The study of American song invites one into the study of the American psyche as do few other disciplines."¹⁵ He continues by saying that we gain a glimpse into America's history when composers use their songs as a type of diary depicting how America has become a poly-cultural country. American art song has become a voice of the people, the American people.

The Definition of Art Song

Ned Rorem, one of the most prominent American art song composers, states, "For 'art song' is not a description but an opinion, defensively American, coined to distinguish the genre—in kind if not in quality—from 'pop song.'"¹⁶ Carol Kimball, prolific author on the subject of art song, states "Art song is a unique hybrid of poetry

¹⁵ Thomas Hampson, foreword to *A Singer's Guide to American Art Song 1870-1980*, by Victoria Etnier Villami, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, INC., 1993), ix.

¹⁶ Ned Rorem, "*The American Art Song from 1930 to 1960: A Personal Survey by Ned Rorem*. Liner notes for *But Yesterday is Not Today*. Donald Gramm, Donald Hassard, Bethany Beardslee, Robert Helps. *New World Records 80243*. Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc..

and music, fashioned of two arts that from earliest times were considered ‘sister arts.’¹⁷ According to The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online, Art Song is defined as “a song intended for the concert repertory, as opposed to a traditional or popular song, a short vocal piece of serious artistic purpose. During the 18th century art song came to have its predominant modern meaning of secular solo song with an independent keyboard accompaniment.”¹⁸ Poetry and music coexist in art song, and their joint prominence works hand in hand to create imagery for the listeners. Imagery occurs in poetry, but when music is involved, it heightens the audience’s emotions even more than the spoken word.

What exactly is an art song? A wide range of opinions regarding art song criteria exists and continues to change over time. Kimball is an accepted expert in the area of art song and many in America use her book *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* as a text and reference source on the topic. She has written articles and reviews in several professional journals including *The Journal of Singing* and *The Opera Quarterly*. Kimball further defines art song as follows: “Art song is not like popular song. Words to popular songs or musical theatre songs are properly called ‘lyrics’ and are the products of a collaborative process between a lyricist and a composer working as a team. The song is usually created with a specific subject or an existing story upon which both words and music are based.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Carol Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2013), 15.

¹⁸ Grove Music Online, s.v. “Art song” by Peter Dickinson, H. Wiley Hitchcock and Keith E. Clifton, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2240068>.

¹⁹ Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, 16.

Georgia Stitt and American Art Song

Georgia Stitt's name is unfamiliar to many people who sing art song. She is becoming well known in the musical theatre and choral music worlds, and is also known for her gender equality activism in the arts. "As a songwriter, Georgia Stitt can be described in one very simple word: honest. Within a few short bars of music, she captures and creates amazing emotional energy which can be both raw and poetic all at once."²⁰ If one important criterion to recognize a song as art song is that it should be written with existing poetry, all three of Stitt's pieces being presented in this paper will be labeled as such.

Art song is a union of poetry and music and that union creates an opportunity for the performers to make decisions about the characters. The interpretation of the words and music can vary, of course, and it is up to the performer to come up with the reason why the character is singing those words. Anytime a singer studies a song one objective is to decide why the character is singing the song. In an opera, we are given the storyline, and the same applies to a musical. Art song allows some freedom in the storytelling and allows the performer to decide more details about the character. Paying attention to the Kimball's "Components of Style" can allow discovery for the performer who the character in the song is and why the composer made certain musical or dramatic choices.

There are several books written about art song with most being annotated bibliographies such as Victoria Etnier Villamil's *A Singer's Guide to American Art Song*

²⁰ Bryce Ives, Review of *The Music of Georgia Stitt*, Directed by Jordan Reid Ybarzabal, Randall Theatre, Melbourne, Australia, February 22, 2010, <http://www.stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/music-georgia-stitt>.

1870-1980²¹ or short history of art song like Barbara Meister's *An Introduction to the Art Song*.²² Each of these books has validity in bringing attention to art song but only as a bibliographical source.

As to date, very little has been written on the codification of art song. Published in 2006, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* written by Carol Kimball is the most current and complete guide to identifying art song. Most books about art song were published at least 20 years ago, if not more, and offer little to no information beyond titles and composers with biographical information. Kimball's "Components of Style" found in *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, accomplishes a comprehensive list of elements to identify art song differently from folk or popular song. Understanding how singers may be classifying songs only builds the point of discussion for the current existence of art song and musical theatre hybridity. This book also contains useful information specifically on working with poetry, choosing repertoire, and planning and formatting recitals. Kimball also includes an appendix focusing on printed program formats. This book is a necessary resource for all teachers of art song. This paper will use Kimball's "Components of Style" as the authoritative source in current 21st century art song classification.

Carol Kimball's "Components of Style"

Kimball has created a guide for criteria of an art song which she terms, "Components of Style."²³ These broad criteria are "melody, harmony, rhythm,

²¹ Victoria Etnier Villamil, *A Singer's Guide to the American Art Song 1870-1980* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993).

²² Barbara Meister, *An Introduction to Art Song* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980).

²³ Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, 3.

accompaniment, and poets/text.”²⁴ She breaks down each of these categories into “subsections” and points out that studying each component is useful for defining the style of the art song. She reminds us that as important as it is to break down each component, it is imperative to also look at the combination of the components and how that affects the performance of the song.

The first of Kimball’s “Components” is melody. Melody is usually the first thing a listener is drawn to and it is found not only in the vocal line but also in the accompaniment. Vocal articulation plays a large role in melody. Composers use the melody to draw attention to a dramatic part of the text or to evoke a certain emotion from the listener. Melody can use shapes and contours that create a calm, serene environment for the listener or use angular leaps and wide range to set a mood of chaos. A subsection of melody includes range and tessitura. Many composers have singer muses who inspire their writing. The limitations of their muses’ voices can affect the way a song is written by the composer. Melody is directly connected to text setting, where harmony is the key to creating imagery.

Harmony creates the mood of the song. Harmony will be discussed on all three of Stitt’s art songs because of its importance to the expression of the words. “Harmony combined with melody and rhythm can produce momentum in a song, create tension, sustain intensity, or provide release.”²⁵ When the harmony is connected to the poetry, it is most effective. Composers use major/minor keys not only to affect emotion but also to divide sections in the song. “It is important to notice the structure of chords in a song,

²⁴ Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, 3.

²⁵ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006), 6.

and the kinds of harmonic progressions used.”²⁶ Dense harmonies can create great lush moments of expression while sparse harmony and simple chords can create a sense of stillness and longing. Tonality is a subset of harmony. Tonality describes the key center and scale patterns used in the song.²⁷ Another subset includes text illustration through harmonic means. “A composer can suggest mood, atmosphere, or dramatic context by using specific harmonies or harmonic progressions.”²⁸

Rhythm is an important component in art song. Much like melody, the composer not only uses the rhythm of the melody and accompaniment but also must bring attention to the rhythm of the poetry. Rhythms are used for text painting to bring out certain emotion in the vocal line and accompaniment. Inflection can accentuate emotional ups and downs and certainly make it more interesting to listen to a song when the composer treats the text with delicate precision. A composer uses rhythm in sound and silence to emphasize tension or create an emotional release. Tempo is a subsection of rhythm and is the pace of the emotional journey of the song. Stitt uses rhythmic patterns to draw emotion out of her text. To unify structure in her art songs, she uses ostinatos, syncopations, and polyrhythms. Use of syncopation is “highly important as a means of emotional expression, tension, and release.”²⁹

The accompaniment is essential in art song. “Figures in the piano can set the emotional or dramatic mood of the song, or become a participant in the poetic texture—Gretchen’s spinning wheel, the hoof beats of a galloping horse, the flirtatious movements

²⁶ Kimball, *Song*, 9.

²⁷ Comparing tonal music vs. atonal music, tonal music has a key center where atonal music lacks any tonal center.

²⁸ Kimball, *Song*, 9.

²⁹ Kimball, *Song*, 13.

of a temptress, the quiet serenity of a graveyard, rain slapping against a windowpane, a Spanish guitar, the grasping fingers of phantoms, the whispering leaves of a tree.”³⁰ Many composers use another instrument as a voice in the song, creating a denser texture with more complexity. The texture is a subsection of the accompaniment component and can be linear or contrapuntal. Linear texture³¹ usually occurs when the poetry needs stillness and clarity. The linear texture is sparse and simple. Contrapuntal texture involves independent melodies, which occur simultaneously. “There is a partnership between singer and accompaniment that makes the art song the most sensitive type of collaboration,”³² stated Meister. Another subsection to accompaniment is “shared material with the voice.”³³ When the voice and accompaniment share material is usually because of the meaning of the poem. The shared material can also occur in rhythmic material.

A crucial “component of style” in art song is poetry/text. The task of finding the perfect text for a song is easier for composers who love poetry. “The composer’s initial job is to find an appropriate poem. The test of this is a poem’s final enhancement by music; it is contrariwise inappropriate when both words and music add up to an issue of mutual confusion. One poem may be so intrinsically musical that a vocal setting would be superfluous. Another may be so complex that addition of music would mystify rather

³⁰ Kimball, *Song*, 14.

³¹ “Linear texture is sparse, fashioned of only a single line in each hand of the piano accompaniment.” Kimball, *Song*, 16.

³² Barbara Meister, *An Introduction to Art Song* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980), 13.

³³ Kimball, *Song*, 15.

than clarify its meaning.”³⁴ Kimball points out, “Most composers of art song have a strong love of literature and a keen knowledge [of] what sort of poems attract them as a composer.”³⁵ Barbara Meister writes, “One [thing] which most clearly distinguishes art song from even the finest popular ballads is structure.”³⁶ In art song, the structure is determined by the text, whether it is strophic, where all of the poem’s verses are sung to the same music, or through-composed, in which each part of the text has its own music. This structure is the final element that helps define a song as art song. The unification of all the “Components of Style” is the key to an honest and polished performance. This unification can only occur once the singer has truly broken each art song apart. Among many criteria, the four “Components of Style” drawing focus to structure are accompaniment, rhythm, poetry, and range/tessitura.

³⁴ Ned Rorem, “Writing Songs” in *Setting the Tone: Essays and a Diary* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1983), 300.

³⁵ Kimball, *Song*, 19.

³⁶ Meister, *An Introduction to the Art Song*, 16.

CHAPTER 3

COMPOSERS USING HYBRIDITY IN AMERICAN ART SONG

Two American art song composers, Leonard Bernstein and Ned Rorem, deserve a more in-depth look due to their contribution to art song and the role they play as influences on Guettel, LaChiusa, and most importantly Stitt, who will be discussed more extensively. Many composers are willing to push boundaries beyond general classifications in their musical writings and therefore stretching the boundaries of the genre. Bernstein and Rorem began creating a hybrid of musical theatre and art song in the 1950's. Studying the influential composers of the past sixty years becomes necessary, for composers and performers alike, when learning about current art song composers in order to understand how they were influenced. To accept what is new, we must first study Bernstein and Rorem, who led the way in breaking down the barriers and promoting acceptance of a hybrid American art song. Through their various compositions, Rorem and Bernstein have influenced the work of other composers and have encouraged acceptance of hybridity in American art song.

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts to Russian-Jewish immigrants, Louis Bernstein found his love for music after a relative gave the family an old upright piano. He began taking piano lessons as a young boy. At the age of sixteen, he changed his name to Leonard. His family moved to Boston where he studied at Boston Latin School. He graduated in 1935 and went on to study at Harvard University majoring in music. After graduating from Harvard in 1939, he studied at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Bernstein was a composer who “convincingly straddled the fence between classical and popular music.”³⁷ He struggled to find the proper vessel for his talent and was conflicted between the classical and popular traditions in music. He still played by the rules of whatever genre he inhabited no matter how much he stretched them. Even though the number of songs he wrote for solo voice and piano is small, his contribution to art song is important. Bernstein’s most well known work is found in musical theatre with *On the Town*, *Candide*, and *West Side Story*. He created texture in all of his music by carefully placing rhythms and allowing the rhythms to illustrate environments and moods.

Standard criteria for categorizing song as art song is that a poet must write the text. Bernstein, however, wrote text for some of his songs, that “border on cute [and] sentimental...”³⁸ Though Bernstein wrote some of his text, his songs are still considered art song, which illustrates the ambiguity in establishing a standard definition for all American art song.

A specific example of his hybridity is *La Bonne Cuisine: Four Recipes*. Bernstein used the texts from “La Bonne Cuisine Française” by Émile Dumont and created his own English translation, which he set to music. His playful use of his loose English translation, allows the performer to create a whimsical world. He uses pace by flanking the set with the lively, upbeat songs and inserts the slower songs between the two. Bernstein pushed the form of art song in such a way that we cannot separate his art songs from his operas or his musicals.

³⁷ Victoria Etnier Villamil, *A Singer’s Guide to the American Art Song 1870-1980* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), 47.

³⁸ Villamil, *A Singer’s Guide to the American Art Song 1870-1980*, 47.

Ned Rorem (b. 1923)

Ned Rorem is one of America's most well-known, prolific composers of song. He also wrote operas as well as piano and orchestral works. "Ned Rorem was the first twentieth-century American composer to champion [art] song as a genre, and is considered by many to be the foremost American song composer."³⁹ He was born in Richmond, Indiana and received his early piano training and composition studies in Chicago. As a child, the music of Debussy and Ravel had a substantial effect on his songwriting. Rorem continued his education at Northwestern University, The Curtis Institute, and the Juilliard School of Music. He studied with well-known art song composers Virgil Thompson, Aaron Copland, and David Diamond. He learned counterpoint from Gian Carlo Menotti. Along with his American education, Ned Rorem also studied abroad. This experience had a huge influence on his style, making it both refreshing and unique. He lived in Paris for eight years and studied on a Fulbright scholarship with Arthur Honegger. Studying with these various composers helped Rorem create a style that is a hybrid: opera from Menotti, simplicity from Copeland and impressionism from Honegger.

Rorem and Bernstein were contemporaries and became great friends. Rorem admired Bernstein and wrote many articles about the brilliance of his compositions, including an article in appreciation of Bernstein's contribution to the world of music. "He is a composer whose influence on other composers is at once vast and vague. Vast, because in giving Broadway [and] Opera a good name— [and] eclectic though he be— he spawned a genre that changed the very skeleton of our musical theater. Vague, because

³⁹ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 245.

the effect of eclectics on others is by nature as ambiguous as the effect of others on them.”⁴⁰

Rorem has always admitted to writing with the voice in mind even when composing for other instruments such as violin or percussion. He says, “I always think vocally... It’s the vocalist in me trying to get out. Music is, after all, a sung expression, and any composer worthy of the name is intrinsically a singer whether he allows it or not.”⁴¹ His experiences and influences helped to shape his writing style. “If you sing words as you would speak them, if you develop a viewpoint about the verse, if you care about the sense, then the music –or at least my music–will automatically fall into place around the poem like a velvet cloak around a naked form.”⁴² Rorem has written more than 500 songs, which were heavily influenced by his love of poetry. He wrote nearly twenty books himself but he never used his own texts in his compositions. However, the skill of writing served him well when choosing text to set to music. “Rorem has the innate ability to select those [text] of exquisite craftsmanship.”⁴³ He was a master at text setting. He learned the natural flow of text and paid close attention to syncopation, accents of words, changes of meter, and other rhythmic devices to avoid clumsy poetry phrasing. After 1950, Rorem preferred setting American poetry.

⁴⁰ Ned Rorem, “Leonard Bernstein (An Appreciation),” *Tempo*, New Series, no. 175 (1990): 6-9. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/944575>.

⁴¹ “SFA Music Faculty to Perform Works of Art Song Composer Rorem- Everything Nac.” *Everything Nac*, 23 Jan. 2018, www.everythingnac.com/archives/63559.

⁴²Alex Ross, “The Gentleman Composer: Eighty Years of Ned Rorem,” *The New Yorker*, October 20, 2003, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/20/the-gentleman-composer>.

⁴³ “Ned Rorem,” Song of America: Composers, Accessed February 27, 2018, <http://www.songofamerica.net/composer/rorem-ned>.

CHAPTER 4

GEORGIA STITT- A BIOGRAPHY

American composer and conductor Georgia Stitt was born in 1972 in Atlanta, Georgia and spent most of her childhood in Covington, Tennessee. She started playing the piano at age 7 and participated in every musical activity she could find. She learned to play the clarinet, flute, baritone saxophone, French horn, mellophone, trumpet, trombone, and even took lessons on the tuba for a semester. Her artistic interests also included the marching band and the school choir. By the time she was fourteen, she was working as a professional pianist for churches and theatres. She grew up sight-reading Bach and Mozart, and stated, “I learned about structure, economy, and clarity of gesture from them.”⁴⁴

When Stitt was involved with theatrical productions, she was usually found playing in pit orchestras. She never considered herself a theatre kid but rather a “music kid,”⁴⁵ even though she has always been drawn to musical theatre. During her youth, Stitt went to several music camps. At these camps, she learned to play different instruments, took master classes and also began composing music. The summer after ninth-grade, she attended the five-week Sewanee Summer Music Festival in East Tennessee. At the festival, Stitt majored in piano and minored in clarinet. During the music festival, participants were asked to pick an elective to study for the five weeks. She chose composition and ended up studying with Paul Phillips, a faculty member at Brown University. That summer she wrote a duet for piano and viola, which was performed at the end of the festival during the Parents Weekend. “I don’t think I’d ever felt as

⁴⁴ Georgia Stitt, email to the composer, June 14, 2017.

⁴⁵ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

powerful as I did when that piece premiered.”⁴⁶ Upon returning home from the festival, Stitt began private composition lessons and eventually majored in music theory and composition at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University. During her sophomore year, she worked with Dr. Michael Alec Rose, a faculty member at Vanderbilt, on vocal settings of poetry. This same Professor encouraged her to research recordings by women composers. Stitt’s obsession with reading and her love of words brought about a clear career path for her songwriting. She continued her studies at New York University earning her M.F.A. degree in Musical Theatre Writing.

Stitt: Music Career

Stitt currently works playing in pit orchestras, music directing, and conducting in New York. She has worked extensively in TV and film. She was the music supervisor on the film *The Last Five Years* (2014) and the music consultant for the feature film *The Stepford Wives* (2004). She was the vocal coach for contestants on the NBC show *America’s Got Talent* (2008). Stitt worked as the assistant music director for the NBC show *Clash of the Choirs* (2007), the on-camera vocal coach on the NBC show *Grease: You’re The One That I Want* (2007), production music coordinator for the Disney/ABC TV musical *Once Upon a Mattress* (2005), and music director for NBC Live *The Sound of Music* (2013). Her Broadway career includes assistant conductor of *Little Shop of Horrors* (2003/2004), associate conductor of the *Encores!* production of *Can-Can*. Her other Broadway credits include *Avenue Q*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *The Music Man*, *Titanic*, and *Annie*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Georgia Stitt, email to the composer, June 14, 2017.

⁴⁷ “About Georgia,” Biography, Georgia Stitt words and music, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://georgiastitt.com/bio/>.

Stitt: Composer

Stitt never focused specifically on composing vocal music, but it has always been her desire to use music as a storytelling device. Due to her love of words, she was drawn to musical theatre. For several summers during her college years, she worked as a pianist and conductor at the College Light Opera Company in Massachusetts and discovered she would rather be the creator of the score rather than the performer of it. With this realization, the fire was lit to begin writing musicals and songs.

Stitt fell in love with the music of Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Francis Poulenc, and Leonard Bernstein and began to experiment with color and orchestration. “I read everything I could find on Leonard Bernstein. He seemed to be celebrated in the classical music world and the musical theatre world.”⁴⁸ Since Stitt began her studies as a classical musician the draw to Bernstein, his music, and all he embodied as a composer was strong. “Once in a generation a Leonard Bernstein comes along. [He was] somebody who [was] a consummate musician and I aspire to be in that category. I want to write the kind of music that musicians appreciate and musical theatre audiences appreciate too. Adam Guettel, Ricky Ian Gordon, and Michael John LaChiusa are in that category.”⁴⁹

Her influences in musical theatre are extensive and also include Stephen Sondheim. “He’s the master” Georgia states. She also loves the works of Frank Loesser, Adam Guettel, Michael John LaChiusa, and Jason Robert Brown, who happens to be her husband. Stitt is inspired by the popular music of composers Joni Mitchell and Sara Bareilles. All of Stitt’s influences can be heard throughout her catalog of music. She weaves a canvas full of colors by using different instruments with the piano to

⁴⁸ Georgia Stitt, “An Interview with Georgia Stitt.” by Victoria Myers. *The Interval: The Smart Girl’s Guide to Theatricality*, August 14, 2014, <http://www.theintervalny.com/interviews/2014/08/an-interview-with-georgia-stitt/>.

⁴⁹ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

accompany the voice, such as violin and cello. She incorporates unique rhythms that accentuate the articulation of the text and emotion. The accompaniments in her music are carefully crafted. When asked about tessitura and range in her pieces, she always refers to the text and what it requires of the music. Her art songs are written with a slightly different approach than her theatre pieces. “When writing for the theater, you make decisions about who a character is pretty early in the writing process, and those choices sustain you through the entire score. Stand-alone songs often start [with] a key that sounds good in my voice and then evolve as other people start singing them. If I know I’m writing for a specific performer, I’ll put the song in the meatiest part of that person’s voice. The answer [to deciding on key and vocal range] is different every time.”⁵⁰

Stitt has always loved literature and composition. She was particularly excited when she realized she was able to combine poetry and composition through musical theatre. Stitt’s writing focuses first on the story and then uses the character to convey emotions through the vocal line. She stated, “It was [like] a light bulb [went] off when I realized that you could tell stories with music, and the more I knew about musical structure(s) and narrative structure(s) the more they fed each other.”⁵¹ Poetry and the music are of equal importance in art song. Many modern composers, including Stitt, understand that the combination of the demands of the music and the importance of the text/poetry are what lead them organically to write art song. During an interview with the musicnotes.com blog she was asked about her writing process when using others’ text. She stated, “When I’m working with pre-existing text, the words dictate all kinds of

⁵⁰ Georgia Stitt, Email to the composer, June 14, 2017.

⁵¹ Georgia Stitt, “Georgia Stitt: Her need to tell... through music,” Interview by Frances McGarry, Ph.D., *First Online With Fran*, October 26, 2015, <https://firstonlinewithfran.com/2015/10/26/georgia-stitt-her-need-to-tell-through-music>.

choices. Words, especially pre-existing poetry, have their own rhythms and their own energies. The vowels demand to be held for certain amounts of time and the meanings of the words claim prominence that I then echo with musical architecture. Sometimes when I'm setting a poem to music I feel like my job is closer to archaeologist than composer. I'm there to uncover the music that the words are showing me. It's already there; I just find it."⁵²

Stitt is a composer of many genres of music, but she makes it a point to let people know she is classically trained. She says it also helps her to be identified as such by composing choral music. Stitt is constantly fighting the stereotype of being "just a musical theater composer."⁵³ She is much more than that: she has written seven musicals, eleven choral compositions, co-written an orchestral piece with her husband, and seventeen art songs.

When coaching with and interviewing Stitt, she also spoke of the complications of creating a recording of her art songs. The difficulty is finding a market for the recording and also deciding which singers to use for the material to draw a certain crowd. In a recent bio, Stitt lists "she is currently at work on a collection of theatrical art songs for legit voice."⁵⁴ Her hope is that the entire vocal community, including classical singers and teachers, will listen to these new art songs with an open mind. There should be room enough for all types of music and mutual respect for all genres.

⁵² Editor, "Q&A with Lyricist, Composer, Music Director and All-Around Broadway Pro, Georgia Stitt," Behind the Broadway Scenes with Georgia Stitt and MusicNotes (blog), July 22, 2014, <https://www.musicnotes.com/blog/2014/07/22/broadway-pro-georgia-stitt/>.

⁵³ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

⁵⁴ "Business Affairs: Georgia Stitt (Newly Elected)," Dramatist Guild of America, Accessed March 7, 2018. <https://www.dramatistsguild.com/advocacy/georgia-stitt/>.

Several “Components of Style”⁵⁵ must be considered when attempting to categorize Stitt’s songs as art song. Based on Carol Kimball’s definition of art song and personal experience, the characteristics that indicate Stitt’s songs are art songs and not stand-alone musical theatre songs come from all of Kimball’s main components: melody, harmony, rhythm, accompaniment, and poets/texts. Using Kimball’s components to establish art song standards, the three art songs that will be discussed are “When I am Dead,” and “The Wanting of You” and “I Have Almost Everything I Need,” both from the *Alphabet City Cycle*. “When I Am Dead” follows more closely the typical art song format: an established famous poet writes the poetry, and the musical structure is more classical in sound. The two art songs from the *Alphabet City Cycle* challenge the conventional idea of art song. “The Wanting of You” sits in a lower speech-type range and therefore the singer can use more of a Chest Voice dominant sound into a belt, not usually associated with performing art song. The poetry has been written by one of Stitt’s contemporaries and her friend, Marcy Heisler. Heisler uses contemporary language and poetic elements such as rhyming and alliteration. These challenges create interest in the subject of hybridity in art song.

The importance of poetry/music analysis for the singer can lead to discoveries often missed upon the first hearing of a song. The intent of this paper is reveal reasons each song can be identified as an art song.

⁵⁵ Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, 16.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF “WHEN I AM DEAD”

Stitt dedicated “When I Am Dead” to Avery Funkhouser (1939-2013), a woman whom she calls her “second mother.” Funkhouser passed away from complications due to lung cancer at the age of 74. Stitt wanted to express what she felt Funkhouser was experiencing as a result of the illness and her overwhelming desire to let those around her know everything would be okay after her death. Stitt wrote this song to be sung by Soprano Rebecca Luker, who created the role of Lily in *The Secret Garden* on Broadway. “Ms. Luker is ideally matched to what has been called the new art song, a semi-popular, semi-classical genre inspired in part by Stephen Sondheim's impressionistic music for *Sunday in the Park With George*. But like that of many of the songs in that genre, her impeccable craft often suppresses defining personality.”⁵⁶

Victorian author Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) wrote the poetry for “When I Am Dead” when she was a teenager. According to Poets.org, “Christina Rossetti is increasingly being reconsidered a major Victorian poet. She has been compared to Emily Dickinson but the similarity is more in the choice of spiritual topics than in poetic approach, Rossetti’s poetry being one of intense feelings, her technique refined within the forms established in her time.”⁵⁷ The poetry’s language lends itself to the art song tradition. The rhyme scheme and the two-verse structure that she uses in the poem makes it a perfect fit for an art song. Stitt has used Rossetti’s poems for several of her

⁵⁶ Stephen Holden, “Songs With a Highish Brow Find a Sympathetic Voice,” Review of *American Songbook* concert, Allen Room of Frederick P. Rose Hall, New York. February 15, 2005, <http://www.rebeccaluker.com/american-songbook.html>.

⁵⁷ “Christina Rossetti,” Poet, Poets.org, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/christina-rossetti>.

songs and said what draws her to this poetry is that the “space allowed... [the] emptiness that allows space for music to be present”.⁵⁸

“Song: When I Am Dead”

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

“When I am dead my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me,
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt remember,
And if thou wilt forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
sing on, as if in pain;
and dreaming through the twilight
that doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.”⁵⁹

The components that classify “When I Am Dead” as an art song are poets/texts, harmony, and melody.

First, the poem is published under the title “Song: When I Am Dead.” The poetry has a clear rhythm. There are two verses, each with eight lines. Rossetti uses alliteration throughout the poem, beginning with the first line and the use of “dead” and “dearest.” The second line continues with “sing,” “sad,” and “songs.” This alliteration is a mechanism for word painting. The first stanza of the poem invokes specific images of rituals the living perform when a loved one has passed, such as planting flowers in memory of that person. Stitt chose to write the song in C major because “In the language

⁵⁸ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

⁵⁹ Christina Rossetti, *Rossetti Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 36.

of my art songs this one is the most simplistic. [Writing in C Major] was a response to the text because [the text] didn't demand a lot of chromaticism."⁶⁰ Stitt explained: "There is an inevitability to where the music goes. It is surprising [at times], but not too surprising. It lands on the tonic ... there's a lot of dominant to tonic movement ... [overall] its chordally not surprising at all."⁶¹ The key allows the subject matter to be expressed in a lighthearted manner, rather than the dreary emotion that death could invoke. Stitt's opinion of the simple nature of the poetry is reflected in this art song and allows for many interpretations of the piece.

The singer in this piece asks specifically for the living not to plant flowers in her memory and instead draws attention to the simplicity of the grass above the grave. Rossetti used grass to symbolize sustainability even when trampled upon or flooded with rain, just like a memory. Stitt uses an ascending fourth leap throughout the song. This ascending fourth (Example 5.1) not only occurs in the vocal line but also in the accompaniment.



Example 5.1. "When I Am Dead," 4th leap; © 2013 Geocate Music (ASCAP) (used with permission)

"It's surprising when it goes to the A-flat Major [chord] on the word 'remember'... it keeps [the song] from staying in the ii-V-I progression. The more I've worked on avoiding the obvious, that's where something like this A-flat chord becomes part of my

⁶⁰ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

⁶¹ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

language.”⁶² Stitt resolves these chords directly with the use of a perfect authentic cadence, shown in Example 5.2 measures 23 and 24, which creates a sense of home, stillness, and real resolution.

The image shows a musical score for measures 21-24 of the song "When I Am Dead". It consists of two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef and has the lyrics "And if thou wilt... for - get." The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features chords Dm7, F/G, C, and F. The tempo is marked *mf*. The score is numbered 21 at the beginning.

Example 5.2. “When I Am Dead,” mm. 21-24; © 2013 Geocate Music (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The final stanza of the poem speaks of the living world, but the narrator’s perspective changes when death is inevitable. The character sings about being below the grass in the grave, but also reassures the listener that they are justified in either remembering or deciding to forget.

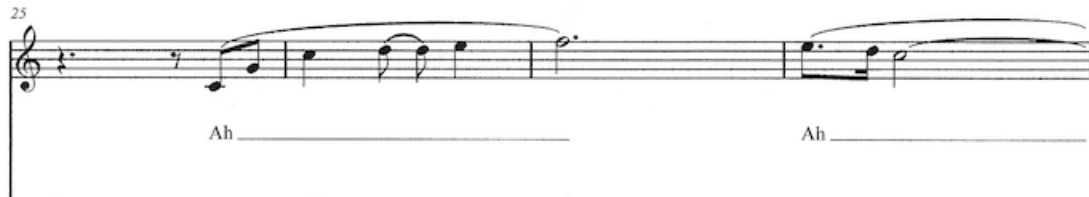
Stitt added two separate sung “ahs” to Rossetti’s text as Stitt said she felt the poetry allowed for space. In the first “ah” section, Stitt is anticipating the hemiola⁶³/polyrhythm⁶⁴ she will use in the next section as seen in measure 26 (Example 5.3). The “ah” occurs between the two verses in mm. 25-29. The “ah” section that Stitt incorporated here can be interpreted as a release of emotion for the dying person.

⁶² Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

⁶³ *On Music Dictionary*, s.v. “hemiola,” accessed March 11, 2018, http://dictionary.onmusic.org/terms/1697-hemiola_36.

⁶⁴ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Polyrhythm,” accessed March 11, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/polyrhythm>.

Perhaps the deceased is not ready to let go until these emotions have been expressed. This outburst transitions the singer into speaking about the afterlife in the second stanza. The “ah” at the end of the song in mm. 55-58 could be interpreted as peace amidst a state of loss. A sense of resolution occurs because Stitt added an “ah” at the end of the song, as a final release of emotion.



Example 5.3. Stitt, “When I Am Dead,” mm. 25-28; © 2013 Geocate Music (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The second stanza uses the same melody as the first, but with altered rhythms to better serve the poetry. The rhythmic movement of this stanza feels more like recitative as Stitt sets the text closer to speech-like patterns without sacrificing the vocal line.

Example 5.4, m. 43, demonstrates the “Component of Style” Kimball labels “rhythms that reinforce [the] text.”⁶⁵ Stitt uses a hemiola/polyrhythm on the text, “that doth not rise nor set” creating imagery of the deceased hesitating to pass to the next life, even though the realization of moving on to the afterlife would be better for all concerned. There is one bar of rest and then the voice returns with straight eighth notes. These eighth notes can be seen as a way of moving forward into a return of the two pattern. Stitt said, “I don’t know that I’m ever conscious of using polyrhythms, but when they occur I welcome them. I think of a music score like a grid — the line of the melody and the rhythm of the words make certain demands, and the emotional needs of the accompaniment (rhythm/groove, harmonic motion, texture) make other demands. If

⁶⁵ Kimball, *Song*, 13.

they clash, I consider whether the clash speaks to the dramaturgy of the song. —if it works, I dig into it and look for ways to exploit it motivically.”⁶⁶

Example 5.4. “When I Am Dead,” mm. 41-49; © 2013 Geocate Music (ASCAP) (used with permission)

Mm. 53-54 seen in Example 5.5, signifies release of not only the dead, but also the living, perhaps allowing their mind to focus on what is present instead of what once existed. Stitt allows space for reflection regarding the transition from the present life to the afterlife, during the space leading into the final ah section. Stitt respects the compact nature of the poem and has written her art song to match the poem’s length.

⁶⁶ Motivically- by means of a motif. Motives are 3-5 note groupings that are repeated.

50

hap - ly may for - get.

Dm7 F/G C F

mf

54

Ah...

Am D7 F

57

C/G D7 F/G C

mp

Example 5.5. “When I Am Dead,” mm. 50-59; © 2013 Geocate Music (ASCAP) (used with permission)

“When I Am Dead” was written for Rebecca Luker, a well-known musical theatre singer, who received classical training at The University of Montevallo and studied with Ben Middaugh. The style and timbre of Luker’s voice is a perfect blend of both music theatre and classical style, which is evident in “When I Am Dead.” A teacher could use this song for a student who is interested in art song or in musical theatre style. This song demonstrates the hybridity between classical art song by using Victorian poetry and the musical theatre contemporary style in the chord structure “a pop version of non-

surprising chords”⁶⁷ that Stitt has written.

⁶⁷ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF "THE WANTING OF YOU (THE STUDENT ON AVENUE B)"

Marcy Heisler (b. 1967)

I'm walking in my head down on Avenue B as the echo of guitar strums.
Tightening my overcoat and waiting for contentment like a bus that never comes.
Crushing my hat over angry hair, I beg my pocket for a cigarette,
But instead I find a nickel and a crumpled little napkin
with a poem for a lover I need to forget.

The wanting of you. It colors everything I do.
It's in my house and in my bed, it's there in every tear I shed
when I don't think I'll make it through.
The wanting of you. It is my unsundered prayer.
I trace your hands upon my skin.
How did I dare to let you in?
It's almost more than I can bear.
The wanting of you.

I patronize myself as I take my chair in the couldn't care less café.
Accept the silent greeting of the mother with the baby and the model with black sharpei.
There's an NYU kid who raises one lid then goes right back to his thousand page book.
And I spend another morning tracing stories in the oatmeal
that some Spanish guy did not remember to cook.

The wanting of you.
It wakes me up at half past two with long gone shadows I converse.
I think it can't get any worse, but how I know that isn't true.
The wanting of you.
It is a never-ending storm.
I wear it everywhere I go just like a coat that doesn't know
that it's supposed to keep me warm.

You... knocking on my door, stumbling over words, laughing at my jokes, losing wallets.
You... never getting mad, sort of getting mad, never understanding,
understanding everything.
You...absolutely right. Absolutely wrong.
Everything that matters, nothing but a song.

I step into the bath round a quarter past three,
Let the water ease my wounded pride.
I wash away my sorrow with a promise of tomorrow but the water doesn't let me hide.
The clock on the wall says "Go ahead. Stall. You're entitled to a way to cope."
And I wonder if it isn't really loneliness that kills you.
I think people really die of hope.

The wanting of you. It colors everything I do.
It's in my house and in my bed, it's there in every tear I shed

when I don't think I'll make it through.
The wanting of you. It is my unsundered prayer.
I trace your hands upon my skin.
How did I dare to let you in?
It's almost more than I can bear.
The wanting of you.⁶⁸

“The Wanting of You (The Student on Avenue B)” is the first of five songs in the *Alphabet City Cycle* written for soprano, violin, and piano written in 2004 with poetry by Marcy Heisler. Kate Baldwin, who has appeared on Broadway in the 2017 revival of *Hello, Dolly*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and the 2003 revival of *Wonderful Town*, premiered *Alphabet City Cycle*. The choice of Kate Baldwin as the soloist to premiere this song cycle complicates the art song label. She has a soprano voice, but also uses some belt qualities in the cycle when the emotion calls for it. Baldwin’s voice does have a consistent vibrato and often uses head register. These characteristics are desirable in singing classical music. *Entertainment Weekly* described her voice as a “velvety soprano”⁶⁹ and *Variety* said it was “a crystal clear soprano,”⁷⁰ but both reviews never refer to her sounding like a musical theatre voice specifically. From the mere fact that she has performed on Broadway and sings mostly musical theatre, most might categorize this cycle as a theatrical piece.

Another complication is the fact that the poetry being used was written by a musical theatre lyricist, Marcy Heisler. Stitt has listed Heisler as the lyricist instead of attributing her as poet, which is an intriguing *faux pas* because Heisler wrote the text as

⁶⁸ Georgia Stitt, “The Wanting of You,” *Alphabet City Cycle* (New York: The Musical Company, 2004).

⁶⁹ Jason Clark, review of *John and Jen*, by Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald, Directed by Jonathan Silverstein, Keen Company, New York, *Entertainment Weekly*, February 26, 2015. <http://ew.com/article/2015/02/26/johnandjen-ew-review/>.

⁷⁰ David Rooney, review of *Finian’s Rainbow*, by Burton Lane and Yip Harburg, Directed by Warren Carlyle, St. James Theatre, New York, *Variety*, October 29, 2009. <http://variety.com/2009/legit/reviews/finian-s-rainbow-6-1200476591/>.

poetry on her own without collaboration with a composer. This would lead one to consider this work to be a musical theatre cycle based on this one fact alone. Unfortunately, a mislabeling of something so important can change the perception of an entire piece. Heisler gave Stitt her poems only after her longtime collaborator, Zina Goldrich, was unsuccessful at setting the poetry. Heisler stated: “While written at separate times in my life, the poems come together in a story maybe I was too much a part of to see clearly...It was Georgia’s music that gave me a new perspective on their meaning, capturing the lure and loss and ultimate inescapability of connection we cannot help but seek.”⁷¹

Components that identify this as art song are accompaniment and text/poet. It was refreshing to hear the composer’s opinion on what she would like the voice to sound like in her music. When coaching this song with her, she spoke of her preference of vocal register and presence of vibrato. She said both should be driven by the emotion. Stitt stated, “There is something about the B3/C#4/D4 area in a woman’s voice that when we hear [the voice] maneuver through the break with power, there is a real vulnerability to [the sound].” She continues by saying that even if you are not vocally trained, that is why belting is desired, because when women belt they are muscling thru a vocal area that should be more vulnerable. Stitt always wants the text to be served above all else. “This is why it can be thrilling to us even on a visceral level,” Stitt continues, “so anything that you do to take away that power of that struggle diminishes [the emotion].”⁷² Standard performance practice for a classical song would not allow for the heavy use of chest register or a chest dominant mix in the mid-voice when singing art song.

⁷¹ Kenneth Jones, “Stitt & Heisler’s ‘Alphabet City Cycle,’ with Baldwin, to Get Digital Release by PS Classics,” *Playbill*, March 12, 2009, <http://www.playbill.com/article/stitt-heislers-alphabet-city-cycle-with-baldwin-to-get-digital-release-by-ps-classics-com-158894>.

⁷² Georgia Stitt, interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

Stitt's use of a violin in this cycle creates a unique character. Employing a violin brings texture to the song as the instrument can accomplish varying dynamics by using different attacks on the strings or longer bowing. The violin does not enter until after the vocal line has completed the first verse. The violin encompasses the role of the memories of the lover (the student on Avenue B) that the singer wishes to forget. The singer speaks of how her desire for the student on Avenue B is controlling her life. She wants to move forward, but she is continuously thinking of this person, hearing this person, and seeing this person in her everyday life. Her want and need for this person become all consuming, so much that her daily life fails to be fulfilling and brings no sense of contentment. The poetry's rhyme scheme changes from song to song in the cycle. "The Wanting of You" has a musical structure of ABABCAB.

Stitt reflects the cyclical nature of the singer's thoughts from the beginning of the accompaniment with a rhythmic repetition of the piano's bass line ostinato in Example 6.1.



Example 6.1. Stitt, "The Wanting of You," song no.1, mm.1-2- bass theme; © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

There are variations on the ostinato theme throughout, but it always returns to the initial idea, like the lingering want of the lover. During the repeating B section, this musical idea expands in range and emphasis of the beat. The violin is introduced just before the bass transitions into a new idea. The bass theme, shown in example 6.1, is constant, only stopping when the character's memories become both pleasant and

melancholy during the C section. Stitt creates musical tension by writing the violin's entrance as an interpreted continuation of the singer's line with a forte-piano accented acciaccatura shown in Example 6.2.

po-em for a lov - er I need _ to for - get. ___

Example 6.2. “The Wanting of You,” song no. 1, mm 12-13; © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The C section has a complete different texture and the emotion clearly shifts to pleasant memories until the bass ostinato returns at m. 60. Stitt chooses to use an octave interval with simple chords in the bass, which mimics a clock's ticking (Example 6.3), while keeping all voices in the treble clef.

You... Knock-ing on my door, stum-bling o-ver words, laugh-ing at my jokes, los-ing wal-lets.

Example 6.3. “The Wanting of You,” song no. 1, mm 47-48; © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The violin joins in halfway through the C section with a soaring melody, leading to a key change that moves directly into the third verse. During the third A section, Stitt does not write anything for the violin. The last B section begins and the violin enters immediately over the voice's text "The wanting of you," with a theme consisting of only three pitches, F#4, A4, and B4. The three-note pattern repeats in a cyclic manner for four measures with a specific two-beat driving rhythm (Example 6.4).

71

mf *mp*

The want-ing of you. — It col-ors ev-'ry-thing I

Example 6.4. "The Wanting of You," song no. 1, mm.71-72; © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

Stitt uses another polyrhythm that creates a feeling of a three grouping against a steady four beat in the voice. This rhythmic tool creates tension and echoes the conflict the character is experiencing due to the lingering memories of her past lover. The poetry reiterates the longing by repeating the text "the wanting of you."

Stitt employs rhythm and silence in a clever way allowing the voice and violin to have a conversation throughout the song. Stitt revealed: "... the violin and voice are often written to duet. But I thought [of the violin as] the third character, the unspoken wanting or ... another character."⁷³ She uses the violin to comment on the singer's emotions and

⁷³ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

also to duet with the bass line in the piano. Portamenti are also used as well as angular accented figures found at the end of the final B section when the violin's portamenti becomes an echo to the singer as shown in Example 6.5. This section creates images for the listener: of the lost lover becoming a physical being, which is further emphasized by the text "I trace your hands upon my skin". That line repeats, as the song concludes providing no resolution for the singer's story. The violin gives the final resolution after the singer has ceased singing, perhaps implying that the singer is still in want of the lost lover.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system shows a vocal line with a portamento (slur) over a note, marked *colla voce*. The second system shows the vocal line with lyrics: "I trace your hands up - on my skin. How did I dare to let you". The third system shows the piano accompaniment with chords and a *colla voce* marking. The fourth system, starting at measure 81, shows the vocal line with lyrics: "in? It's al - most more than I can bear." and the piano accompaniment.

Example 6.5. "The Wanting of You," song no. 1, mm. 79-81; © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS OF “ALMOST EVERYTHING I NEED (THE DIVORCÉE ON AVENUE C)”

“Who needs a lot of space? Who needs a lot of light?
I’ll get myself a chair, a pad and pen to write,
A ficus for the corner and some pictures hung just right,
I have almost everything I need.

I’ll take some wooden crates and make a makeshift bar.
There’s an antiques fair in Rhinebeck.
I’ll just borrow someone’s car.
Some curtains for the window, and some daises in a jar
and I have almost everything I need.

So it’s a bit dark. So it’s a bit damp. I’ll just close my eyes pretending I’m at camp.
It’s going to be great. It’s going to be fun.
With a prayer for good luck and a bucket of Windex, this room will be perfect for one.

The smell of baking bread, some good books I can read,
A fire escape for dreaming and a heart that’s fin’ly freed.
A brand new life without you. I’m a happy girl indeed
and I have almost everything I need.
I have almost everything I need.”⁷⁴

“Almost Everything I Need” is the second song of five in the *Alphabet City Cycle*.

The components that identify this song as an art song are melody, rhythm, accompaniment, and text. The piece is written in C Major, creating a sense of “openness” represented in the key signature. The first eight measures begin with block chords that include a pedal tone. The pedal is sounded in the highest pitch of the right hand. The block chords create a sense of heavy stillness.

Stitt showcases space through use of range: a full three octaves. The wide fingering required of the pianist reiterates the space of being alone. The violin soars in a

⁷⁴ Georgia Stitt, “Almost Everything I Need,” *Alphabet City Cycle* (New York: The Musical Company, 2004).

higher range above the simple chords. Stitt writes, “I feel like [the violin] is more of a reaching, breathing line suggesting possibility.”⁷⁵

Spare, Non-rubato ♩ = 92

Violin

Vocal

Piano

Who needs a lot of space? Who needs a lot of light?

Example 7.1. “Almost Everything I Need,” song no. 2, mm. 1-8: © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

Once the voice enters in m. 5 (Example 7.1), the violin is silent. The lack of the violin at m. 5 could symbolize the loss of the spouse and the sense of loneliness, yet it allows the singer to begin to move past the present sadness. The elongated rhythms evoke stagnancy with the only movement in short bursts in the vocal line. The rhythms of the vocal line are very conversational like the poetry. Stitt also utilizes a repetitive melody in the vocal line representing the circling feeling of being lost. She uses the rests in the vocal line to expand on the feeling of space, which is interesting because the first line of the poem is “Who needs a lot of space?” The singer is having an internal battle,

⁷⁵ Georgia Stitt, Email to the composer, September 11, 2017.

wanting resolution but still feeling the overwhelming sensation of wide-open space of time.

Beginning at m. 28 (Example 7.2), the piano finally begins to break up the block chords with an expansive version of an arpeggiated chord. An ascending pattern is implemented in the vocal line and also in the accompaniment.

The image displays a musical score for Example 7.2, consisting of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 27 to 29, and the second system covers measures 30 to 33. Each system includes a vocal line (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom two staves). The vocal line features lyrics: "I'll just bor-row some-one's car. Some cur-tains for the win - dow, and some dai - sies in _ a jar and I have al - most". The piano accompaniment shows block chords in the left hand and arpeggiated chords in the right hand. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present in both systems. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature.

Example 7.2. "Almost Everything I Need," song no. 2, mm. 27-33: © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The poetry's structure is in AABA. This form feels more contemporary and might remind the listener of the familiar structure of a contemporary pop song.

The B section, beginning at m. 36, has more movement, which Stitt achieves by condensing the spaces that occur between each vocal entry. The vocal line starts an upward motion. In m. 43 (Example 7.3), the violin also begins a slow rise in pitch

possibly representing a phoenix rising from the ashes toward hope. The rhythm has a sense of forward movement and takes the place of the stagnant feeling that occurred at the beginning of the song.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is a violin line starting at measure 43, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and then a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. It features a continuous eighth-note pattern with a rising melodic line. The middle staff is the vocal line with lyrics: "prayer for good luck and a buck-et of Win - dex, this room will be per - fect". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and then a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line.

Example 7.3. “Almost Everything I Need,” song no. 2, rising motion in violin: © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

Stitt continually utilizes the same rhythmic figure in the vocal line demonstrated in Example 7.4, starting at the beginning of the song, which adds consistency to the song.

The image shows a single staff of music containing a rhythmic figure. It consists of a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter note, all moving in a descending melodic line.

Example 7.4. “Almost Everything I Need,” song no. 2, rhythmic figure used in vocal line: © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

The words speak the truth of the character and are at times gloomy. The natural ease of the words used in this song reflects the universal feeling of loneliness. There is a point in the song as seen in example 7.5, where the poet decides on a positive outlook by saying, “It’s going to be great. It’s going to be fun. With a prayer for good luck and a

bucket of Windex, this room will be perfect...”⁷⁶ but then reality sinks back in with the phrase ending in “for one,” which occurs unaccompanied. At this point the word “perfect” includes the longest note in the song, giving it forced nature as the violin plays eighth note repeated staccati and accented figures an octave above the vocal line. The conflict of the rhythmic pattern in the violin as opposed to the vocal rhythm creates tension. Relief occurs when the words “for one” are sung and the violin stops playing (Example 7.5). The words are sung over a hanging chord with a pedal in the lowest note. The pitch choice colors the text into a sinking realization of being alone and starting over again.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: vocal, violin, and piano. The score is numbered 47 at the beginning. The vocal line starts with a series of eighth notes, followed by a long note. The violin line plays eighth notes staccato and accented. The piano accompaniment features a bass line with a pedal point. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). Tempo markings include *poco rit.* (ritardando). The lyrics "for one." are written under the vocal line.

Example 7.5. “Almost Everything I Need,” song no. 2, mm. 47-50: © 2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and MarcyWorks (ASCAP) (used with permission)

Stitt’s careful attention to text setting follows the natural inflection in the English language and creates an honest vulnerability to this song. She achieves clarity by using the rhythms of natural speech and elevating them with the reiteration of rhythms in the

⁷⁶ Georgia Stitt, “The Wanting of You,” *Alphabet City Cycle* (New York: The Musical Company, 2004), 4-5.

violin as well as in the piano. The use of the violin adds dynamics that cannot be achieved with a piano alone. “The violin can create movement and dynamics—crescendos on long notes where the piano can only diminuendo.”⁷⁷ Repeating any figure adds a layer and draws attention to specific words and emotions. Stitt continues to create a mood of stillness through the end of the song. Not once in the text do we hear the main character say something negative about the person they divorced. The only hint of conflict comes from the text “and a heart that’s finally freed.”

⁷⁷ Georgia Stitt, Email to the composer, September 11, 2017.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

When I interviewed and coached with Stitt, she said something striking and it stuck with me. “There’s something about the body of work that you build for yourself that allows people to put you in a category.”⁷⁸ Stitt, while being a popular composer in the musical theatre community, may be having trouble being considered seriously in the classical vocal community because of her musical theatre popularity. Nevertheless, her work is rooted in the traditions of American art song, and is specifically influenced by well-known major art song composers such as Leonard Bernstein.

Analyzing “When I Am Dead,” “The Wanting of You,” and “Almost Everything I Need” using Carol Kimball’s “Components of Style” shows how deeply intertwined text is with music in a way that helps us categorize Stitt’s music as art song. The importance of thinking of music in this way will benefit many people. Lots of voice teachers are searching for music that can bridge gaps and help lead students into new areas of music. The American art song tradition, because of its hybridity, is well situated to help students explore art song.

Also, it’s time to start looking at music for what it is instead of judging the music based on the composers reputation, and this in turn may help us think more broadly and more effectively about repertoire and how we might want to classify the music. “The general climate for American songs is more receptive than ever, and the current generation of song composers deserve credit for fostering it. That audiences are getting

⁷⁸ Georgia Stitt, Interviewed by Carrie Klofach, May 18, 2017.

into the habit of hearing new songs is an important development.”⁷⁹ Even while the harshest critics and elitists say too much pop/musical theatre has seeped into the classical genre of art song, we should remain open to change being brought about by these new composers. I will educate my students on new composers who continue to mix styles and promote them by performing these wonderful examples of American art song.

Georgia Stitt is not only a champion of art song but of women in music. I admire her for her hard work and dedication and activism in supporting and encouraging women in the arts and the world. She has founded *Maestra*, “an organization of female composers and music directors working in the theatre industry in New York City and beyond.”⁸⁰ Her influence, not only in composition but also in the arts in general, is tremendous and the opportunity to create and foster a relationship with such an influential person in the musical theatre industry and beyond has been priceless.

⁷⁹ Anthony Tommasini, “A Sudden, Facile Flowering of American Song,” *Arts: Music*, *New York Times*, June 11, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/11/arts/music-a-sudden-facile-flowering-of-american-song.html>.

⁸⁰ “Maestra,” *Activism*, Georgia Stitt, Updated March 8, 2017, <https://georgiastitt.com/maestra/>.

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APPENDIX

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER FOR GEORGIA STITT



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Sean Patrick Flahaven
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March 6, 2018

Carrie Klofach
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Dear Ms. Klofach,

We are the music publisher for composer-lyricist Georgia Stitt. The Musical Company and Ms. Stitt hereby grant you gratis permission to reprint short excerpts of works by Ms. Stitt in your academic paper to fulfill the requirements of your D.M.A. degree.

As detailed in your request, your paper will be made available for academic purposes through the Arizona State University library system and ProQuest. Any further publication or distribution will require further permission from us.

Thank you,

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Soprano Carrie Klofach received her Master's degree in Musical Theatre Performance from Arizona State University in 2003, and she graduated *cum laude* from Grand Canyon University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. She has been a crossover performer in opera and musical theatre. She has performed many roles with ASU's Lyric Opera Theatre, including "Poppea" in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, "Susannah" in *Susannah*, "Carrie Pimperidge" in *Carousel*, "Cha Cha DiGregorio" in *Grease*, and "Mama Ogre/Fairy Godmother" in *Shrek the Musical*. Carrie was on the First National Tour of VeggieTales Live as Marcy the Stage Manager. She has performed extensively across the Southwest. Some of her favorite roles include "Kala" in *Tarzan the Musical*, "Miss Andrew" in *Mary Poppins*, "Mother Abbess" in *The Sound of Music*, "The Cat in the Hat" in *Seussical the Musical*, "Baker's Wife" in *Into the Woods*, and "Olive" in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. She has originated roles in World premiere musicals as "The Quiltmaker" in *The Quiltmaker's Gift* with Phoenix Theatre Cookie Company and "Mom" in *Decided* a new musical by Brian Kunnari at Musical Theatre of Anthem. Carrie has taught at New Mexico State University, Estrella Mountain Community College, and Arizona State University as a TA and in the Prep Program. Upon graduation in May 2018, Carrie will begin a position as Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre at Milligan College in Tennessee, where she will be building a brand new musical theatre program.