

**THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE IN JOHN GREER'S
*THE RED RED HEART***

MEGAN L. WITTIG
Bachelor of Music, University of Lethbridge, 2012

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MEGAN WITTIG

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Dr. B. Hendsbee Supervisor	Professor	D.M.A.
Dr. M. Richards Thesis Examination Committee Member	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. S. Stringer Conlon Thesis Examination Committee Member	Instructor	D.M.A.
Dr. B. Black Chair, Thesis Examination Committee	Professor	Ph.D.

Abstract

A psychological narrative from nostalgia to optimism binds the songs in John Greer's cycle *The Red Red Heart* together. In the first two songs, images of the present are viewed with fear, discomfort, and confusion while images of the past are viewed with optimistic nostalgia and longing. In the middle of the cycle, the character's emotional responses are reversed, the past now being viewed with negativity and despair, while the present is seen as exciting, joyous, and optimistic. In the final song of the cycle, the character's growth culminates in her cautious hope for the future. The musical setting of the character's changing opinions and feelings towards her past, present, and future will be examined from the perspectives of tonality, climax points, formal structure, melody, expression, rhythm, and accompaniment.

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Part A: Recitals

8:00pm

Thursday, April 3, 2014

Recital Hall

~ ~ Program ~ ~

“With plaintive notes and am’rous moan” from *Samson*

G.F. Handel
(1685-1759)

Carolyn Herrington, piano

Selections from *Mörike Lieder*

Er ist’s
Verborgenheit
Der Gärtner
Gebet

H. Wolf
(1860-1903)

Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse

I. Pantomime
II. Clair de lune
III. Pierrot
IV. Apparition

C. Debussy
(1862-1918)

Jesse Plessis, piano

~ ~ Intermission ~ ~

“L’amerò, sarò costante” from *Il re pastore*

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Norbert Boehm, violin
Carolyn Herrington, piano

On this Island

I. Let the Florid Music Praise
II. Now the leaves are falling fast
III. Seascape
IV. Nocturne
V. As it is, plenty

B. Britten
(1913-1976)

“Ah tardai troppo... O luce di quest’anima” from *Linda di Chamounix*

G. Donizetti
(1797-1848)

Carolyn Herrington, piano

8:00pm

Friday, April 24, 2015

Recital Hall

~ ~ Program ~ ~

Lecture Presentation:

The Past, Present, and Future in John Greer's *The Red Red Heart*

~ ~ Pause ~ ~

The Red Red Heart

- I. The Beginning
- II. Naked in the City Streets
- III. My Mother's Hands
- IV. Laughter
- V. A Red Red Heart

J. Greer
(b. 1954)

Megan Wittig, soprano
Dr. Carolyn Herrington, piano

Part B: Essay

Introduction

The marriage of text and music is central to the genre of art song. Unlike opera in which the arias are contextualized and given meaning through props, costumes, and the surrounding music, in art song, the story must be obtained solely through an understanding of the combination of music and text. The most important contributions toward this understanding come from the composer, the poet, and the performer. The responsibility of interpretation then falls upon the performers' innate emotional and musical responses to the work, and their educated and intelligent dramatic choices based on what has been provided in the score. John Greer's *The Red Red Heart*, a song cycle whose poetry and music is particularly rich with meaning, is no exception.

One of the first steps in understanding a song cycle is establishing the history behind its genesis. For this particular cycle, first reaching out to the composer, John Greer, seemed like the most logical choice. After Greer expressed his willingness to assist, contact was made with the poet, Marianne Bindig, and finally the performer who commissioned the cycle, Canadian soprano Tracy Dahl. *The Red Red Heart* materialized from a recital opportunity in Winnipeg presented to Dahl. Dahl wanted to commission a new piece of music written specifically for her voice, and thought of Winnipeg native John Greer for this project.¹ Dahl and Greer had known each other for several decades and had worked together in a coaching capacity, so Dahl trusted that Greer knew her voice and was able to write well for her. Dahl suggested that Greer look for text with a spiritual meaning. During the summer of 1994, Greer was working at the Banff Centre's

¹ Tracy Dahl, interview with author, October, 15, 2014.

Theatre Arts Program as chorus master on Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*.

Mezzo-soprano Marianne Bindig, who knew Greer from their time at the University of Toronto Opera School, was singing the role of "Baba the Turk" and presented Greer with some of her poems to read. Greer was immediately captivated by three of the poems (the texts which eventually became "The Beginning", "My Mother's Hands", and "A Red Red Heart"), and later chose two other poems he found equally moving to fill out the cycle.²

Thus, the song cycle *The Red Red Heart* was born. In 2014, Dahl and Greer joined forces once again to record the cycle. At the time of publication, this recording had not yet been released.

² John Greer, interview with author, June 26, 2014.

Point of View

When examining a song cycle, at least seven perspectives are in play: those of the poet (Bindig), the composer (Greer), the original performers (Dahl and Greer), the current collaborative pianist, the current vocal performer, and the audience. In order to determine how an audience will receive a piece, one must return to the poet's point of view. In the case of these texts, the poet, Bindig, is the character. Bindig's words serve as a testimony of her feelings and experiences. The composer, Greer, serves as the narrator. His compositional choices reflect his observations on the character's life. The original interpreter, Dahl, had the opportunity to view the text both as an outside observer and as an embodiment of the character herself. Subsequent performers combine the views of the character and the narrator, take into account the unique qualities of the original performers, and then add their own personal experiences to interpret the material on the page. Each group of performers add another layer to the interpretive and dramatic history of the work, and recreate these experiences and emotions for the audience. Through the performance, the audience becomes an external observer who takes all of the information provided by the performers, and creates their own view on the situation of the character, and how the music shapes the text. These multiple points of view help to create more depth within the music and text, and bring the cycle new life each time it is presented.

The Poet's Perspective

Mezzo-soprano Marianne Bindig is known throughout Canada and the United States for her sensitive and dramatically engaging performances in the diverse realms of concert, recital, and operatic repertoire. Operatic roles widely vary from Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, to Meg Page in Verdi's *Falstaff*.³ As a poet, Bindig's work has been set in three song cycles: Greer's *The Red Red Heart*, and Harry Freedman's *The Promised Land* and *Spanish Skies*. Bindig's poetry has also been adapted by roots musician Ben Beveridge on his 2005 CD release *The Parlour Sessions*. Bindig is a sought after clinician and teacher of both voice and poetry.

The style of the text and the writer's background is crucial in understanding art song. Marianne Bindig brings a performer's sensibility to her writing. The text is meant to be recited, which lends itself to song setting. Greer stated that this made her work more conducive to be set to music from the outset.⁴ Bindig's poems, especially when read aloud, show her sensitivity toward how words sound and feel, as well as their meaning within the context of a whole written work. This is true of Bindig's collected works: each of her poems contains the common theme of spirituality and highly descriptive imagery, particularly "Love Poems, A Zealot in the Promised Land" set by Harry Freedman in his song cycle *The Promised Land*.

The inspiration for Bindig's poems comes from all around her. These particular poems are stand-alone works, and not part of any set. They were written during her twenties, and capture her personal experiences and emotions at that time in her life. Both

³ "Biography," Marianne Bindig, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://mariannebindig.com/biography>.

⁴ Greer, interview, 2014.

exciting and terrifying, this time is full of new realizations and discoveries. Emotions are heightened with new experiences of love, loss, and recovery.

During a video chat, Bindig generously shared each of the five personal stories and ideas behind these poems. Bindig seemed to relive the moments as she related them, showing that they were deeply personal. “The Beginning” was written at age twenty-two. Originally without a title, this poem embraces the idea of “self as consciousness”, and the experiences that occur within.⁵ This metaphysical experience allows one to question the reality of their thoughts. The innate spirituality of this poem allows it to be understood on a deeper level, but also allows each person to interpret their own meaning. Personal experiences and beliefs colour if and how a reader may relate to this poem.

Written at age twenty nine, “Naked in the City Streets” shows a much darker side of Bindig’s life. The poem came to her as a fully-formed piece while walking down the street one day.⁶ Born of a complicated love affair, Bindig attempts to express the deep depression she felt at that time in her life. She felt transparent, and was unable to separate her emotions from herself, a common dilemma felt by young adults. At this point in time, Bindig still allowed her relationships and emotions to change her, and had not developed a solid sense of self yet. These anecdotes create a strong ground on which to base one’s performance.

“My Mother’s Hands” is viewed as the heart of the cycle by Greer. Strangely enough, Bindig thinks this an inferior poem, and was shocked that Greer wanted to set it at all. She wrote this poem at age twenty-two while watching a mother interact with her

⁵ Marianne Bindig, Skype call with author, July 8, 2014.

⁶ Ibid.

baby on the subway in Toronto, highlighting the feelings of gratitude, regret, and unconditional love Bindig felt towards her own mother. Bindig is very close to her mother, and experienced a moment of realization that things will always change, and that she will never experience her “young mother” again.⁷ This reflection on childhood is not only a realization of impending age and death, but it also filled with the joy of Bindig’s memories.

“Laughter” was extracted from a larger poem with five stanzas, again written when Bindig was twenty-two. The entire poem is about being emotionally suspended, and working toward personal and professional goals but not achieving them yet.⁸ The seeming lack of control over her life would normally seem discouraging, but Bindig turns this notion on its head in the fourth stanza which eventually became the text for “Laughter”. In this stanza, Bindig highlights the experience of identifying with a kindred spirit, and finding a deep purpose within a friendship. “Margarita”, the name of the larger poem from which “Laughter” is derived, represents a character in Bindig’s head, who is almost an imaginary friend. While some may see this idea as juvenile, it may also be viewed as an outpouring of a creative mind. This stanza seems to be about the feeling of a full heart, which is something that almost everyone can relate to in their own lives, whether it is about a child, friend, or lover.

Finally, “A Red Red Heart” is one of Bindig’s favourite poems. This poem is about deciding to consciously open your heart even if it might result in pain and heartbreak. In her own words, Bindig was in a very tenuous relationship. At this point in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

her life, a former lover, with whom she had a deep emotional and spiritual connection, was coming home, and her desire to be with him once again overshadowed her own current relationship.⁹ The images of Christ and catholicism reflect Bindig's upbringing in the Roman Catholic Church, and her association with the sacred. The text contains no periods, the thread of thought remaining unbroken from beginning to end. These representations of morality and sacredness are relatable to any reader, regardless of their particular religious experience.

⁹ Ibid.

The Composer's Perspective

John Greer, an active composer, arranger, accompanist, vocal coach, and conductor, has worked with many of the great singers of his generations, including Tracy Dahl, Rosemarie Landry, Catherine Robbin, Michael Schade, and Delores Ziegler, to name a few. A graduate of both the University of Manitoba and University of Southern California, Greer studied piano, composition, and conducting. Greer has maintained employment as a coach, composer, and conductor throughout his career, taking positions at the University of Toronto, Opera Lyra in Ottawa, The Banff School of Fine Arts, Eastman Opera Theatre, and the Canadian Opera Company, as well as many other prestigious institutions. A celebrated composer, original compositions include ten song cycles, numerous settings of Canadian folk songs, and *The Snow Queen*, a children's opera written for the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus.¹⁰

The style of the composer greatly determines how a piece of music may be interpreted. By his own admission, all of Greer's compositions are text-driven. "Without words, only the most banal and unspecific musical ideas come. I guess that's why I'm a song composer!"¹¹ Greer's vocal compositions are set with the singer in mind; he chooses settings that strengthen the meaning of the text, and that are conducive to legato singing. In much the same way as Ravel's approach to text setting, Greer chose to respect the integrity of the text, yet also apply his own interpretation from multiple readings of the poem on his own.¹² Thus, text adaptation must be of the same mind; composers reserve

¹⁰ New England Conservatory, "John Greer," accessed April 29, 2015, <http://necmusic.edu/faculty/john-greer>.

¹¹ Greer, interview, 2014.

¹² Peter Kaminsky, "Of Children, Princess, Dreams and Isomorphisms: Text-Music Transformation in Ravel's Vocal Works," *Music Analysis* 19/1 (March 2000): 29.

the right to omit or alter the text as they see fit. Greer took this liberty in order to develop poetic text into song text, omitting or moving lines of text as well as adding titles to otherwise nameless poems.

The original text for “The Beginning” was in two parts. Greer chose his text from the first part. As seen in Example 1, the order of stanzas one and two is reversed, along with the last line of stanza two transplanted to the end of the first stanza. Stanza three is completely removed. Upon reading the entire poem, Greer’s edits seem to create a more defined storyline. The narrative is much easier to follow. Conversely, the text for “Naked in the City Streets” required much less change. Bindig’s original poem has two parts, with Greer choosing only to use the first part. “My Mother’s Hands”, the only poem written with a title, was used in its entirety. The text for “Laughter” comes from a large, five-stanza poem called “Margarita”. Greer extracted the fourth stanza, subtracting only two lines near the end. Upon reading this fourth stanza, joy seems to burst forth off the page, suggesting the text be set in vibrant and exciting way. The use of coloratura, which is often used to represent laughter itself, is a great expressive compositional choice. Finally, the fifth song, “A Red Red Heart”, contains all of Bindig’s original text. Greer’s choices evoke strong images and feelings, making them excellent options to set to music. All of the compositional choices come naturally from the text itself.¹³ The musical structure seems to reveal itself through a deep assimilation of the innate musicality found in the text.

¹³ Greer, interview, 2014.

ORIGINAL POETRY	GREER'S VERSION
<p>And there, on the farther shore, 'midst sun and wind and wave, I saw Christ dancing on the water. He was bright, sharp, stabbing pains, pains of death, pains of birth, their movement across the water, across my body-still-as-stone, ecstatic.</p> <p>The first breath is slapped into my body. I gasp lightning storms, frenzy at the highest frequency, diamond shoes cutting into ice and sparks like white fire, fire of full moons, moons of marble, Christ like fire, Christ like ice, elements capricious, their wilderness complete.</p> <p>It is the beginning of some strange end: the dance without design, the fire without formula, communication without sound, the interaction of light, the science of the spirit.</p> <p>Vocabularies change, evolve, are rendered obsolete. Marble, diamonds, ice and moon clashing white, flashing clear – Christ on the water, dancing for my spirit.</p>	<p>The first breath is slapped into my body. I gasp lightning storms, frenzy at the highest frequency, diamond shoes cutting into ice and sparks like white fire, fire of full moons, moons of marble.</p> <p>And there, on the farther shore, 'midst sun and wind and wave, I saw Christ dancing on the water. He was bright, sharp, stabbing pains, pains of death, pains of birth, their movement across the water, across my body-still-as-stone, ecstatic. Christ like fire, Christ like ice, elements capricious, their wilderness complete.</p> <p>Vocabularies change, evolve, are rendered obsolete. Marble, diamonds, ice and moon clashing white, flashing clear – Christ on the water, dancing for my spirit.</p>

Example #1: Poetry Comparison

The Performer's Perspective

Coloratura soprano Tracy Dahl, a renowned operatic performer, has appeared on many of the greatest stages in the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Teatro alla Scala, Théâtre du Châtelet, and Houston Grand Opera.¹⁴ Dahl is known for her performances as Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Madame Mao in Adam's *Nixon in China*, Olympia in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and Florestine in the world premiere of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Praised for her vocal flexibility and well-executed ornaments and cadenzas, Dahl's engaging dramatic performances have also gained her critical acclaim.¹⁵

This cycle was written specifically for Tracy Dahl's voice, personality, musical intellect, and skill set. However, voices change and grow over time. The first performance of this cycle was in 1994, and the vocal challenges have changed for Dahl. While the long lines required in "The Beginning" were initially simple to execute, they are now more difficult to sustain.¹⁶ Greer mentioned that "Laughter" was a difficult piece for Dahl to learn, and required numerous telephone coachings. Dahl stated this piece was much easier to re-learn after having performed other tonally and rhythmically complex music such as John Adam's *Nixon in China* in 2008 and Peter Ash's *The Golden Ticket* in 2010. As well, Dahl said that she is better able to access low notes and richer vocal colours after performing "Gilda" in *Rigoletto* and "Lucia" in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, two roles that demand immense vocal strength and dramatic impetus. She feels that she can

¹⁴ Dispeker Artists, "Tracy Dahl, Soprano," accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.dispeker.com/artist.php?id=tdahl&aview=bio>.

¹⁵ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Tracy Dahl," accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tracy-dahl/>.

¹⁶ Dahl, interview, 2014.

now take the music to a “new... or a different level”.¹⁷ While the technical demands of certain pieces of music may change over time, some things remain the same. Dahl said that she still finds the music to be a challenge, and has had to slow down and re-learn passages throughout the cycle each time she prepares it for a new performance.

Dramatic interpretation of poetry by the performer can also change over time. Dahl quite elegantly stated that, “Life has a way of altering how you wear poetry.”¹⁸ Dahl was in her early thirties when the cycle premiered, and admits to not fully understanding the meaning behind the text, particularly “Naked in the City Streets”. With the passage of time come more experiences of hardship and vulnerability, all which gave Dahl a different perspective on the text. She specifically recalls that her interpretation of “My Mother’s Hands” drastically changed after her mother was diagnosed with dementia. Dahl now performs this song with a deeper understanding of what needs to be cherished and remembered, all coming from this experience of loss. Serious health issues have also brought a different perspective to her art song interpretation. These personal insights into the music and text give other performers more information to consider when developing their own interpretation.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The Narrative

After prolonged study of the song cycle, a connecting thread became apparent. There is a psychological narrative from negativity to positivity, and more specifically, nostalgia to optimism through the course of the cycle. This through-line becomes visible in the form of the music as well as the use of verb tense throughout. In the first song, “The Beginning”, the character, a young woman, views her present situation with fear and discomfort. She longs for her past, which is viewed with nostalgia and longing. The present occurs in the A sections, while the past is remembered fondly in the B section. This attitude is carried further into “Naked in the City Streets”, but this time, everything seems to be negative. The present, again in the recurring A sections, is filled with stark fear and discomfort. The past, depicted in the B section, is still negative, but is also filled with a longing to go back and alter her decisions.

A striking change occurs in “My Mother’s Hands”. Now the present is viewed with optimism, and the past with disappointment and regret. The A sections contain the present circumstance, and the lullaby-like setting of the text is calming and reassuring. The B section, which represents the past, is full of regret and chastisement for not remembering and treasuring moments long gone. “Laughter” is written completely in present tense, and is full of joy and excitement. The text brings to mind happy imagery and bright colours. This song shows the continuing growth of the young woman toward a more positive life. The last song, “A Red Red Heart”, shows the final shift in character. The song is written in future tense, and is full of tentative hope for what is to come. This psychological narrative highlights a journey of personal growth and development through five separate experiences.

Analysis

I. The Beginning

The first song of the cycle, “The Beginning”, expresses the character’s initial thoughts about her life. She is apprehensive about and unsatisfied with her current situation, fearful about the turns her life has taken. The character looks toward the past with positivity, longing for what was, and has an overwhelming desire to escape the chaos of her everyday reality. Greer captures these emotions in an ABA design.

The song begins with a short introduction. While a sense of calm seems to be indicated by the tempo marking (*Largo*), the triplets in the piano accompaniment suggest a rising sense of agitation. The introduction is composed of two large phrases, with the second phrase following the contour of the first in terms of the use of stepwise motion and expressive markings. Each phrase begins on a rest, serving to establish a sense of unease in the musical texture. The A section is abruptly announced with a staccato, sforzando cluster chord at the end of measure 5. This helps to introduce the new tempo (*Presto agitato*) which blatantly captures the agitation felt by the character.

The musical score for "The Beginning" (mm. 1-5) is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked "Largo" and the dynamic is "pp". The piano accompaniment features triplets and expressive markings such as "come un sospir", "pp", "p", and "sfz". The vocal line has lyrics "The first breath" and a [tempo nuovo] marking.

Example #2: “The Beginning”, mm. 1-5

The A section (mm. 6-29) is quite atonal, tends to indicate negative emotions and discomfort, and occurs in the present. The crisp, dotted rhythms on the first page of music reflect the violence and abruptness of a chaotic life. The word “slapped” in measure 8 is depicted through the use of the jagged grace note leap, large interval, and sudden accidentals.

Musical score for measures 6-9. The tempo is *Presto agitato* with a metronome marking of ♩ = 92. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts at measure 6 with the lyrics "The first breath is slapped in-to my bo- dy." The word "slapped" is marked with a dynamic of *mf* and a jagged grace note leap. The piano accompaniment is marked *mp* and *sempre staccato*. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more complex, syncopated pattern in the left hand.

Example #3: “The Beginning”, mm. 6-9

Greer again employs text painting to further illuminate specific words in both measures 12 and 13. Here, the sixteenth note fioratura used for both “lightning” and “frenzy” reflects the violence suggested by the text. The use of higher notes in this manner creates tension and unease.

Musical score for measures 10-13. The tempo is *Presto agitato*. The key signature has three sharps. The score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts at measure 10 with the lyrics "I gasp light - - ning". The word "lightning" is marked with a dynamic of *mf* and a sixteenth note fioratura. The piano accompaniment is marked *mp* and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The piano part includes a *mf* *echo* marking and a *mp* marking. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more complex, syncopated pattern in the left hand.

Example #4: “The Beginning”, mm. 10-15

Conversely, the B section (mm. 30-56), occurs in the character’s past and captures a serene and dreamlike vision. This section is also more tonal than the previous music, and indicates a period of ease and comfort. The accompaniment sounds lighter and more delicate than the previous section due to the gentle rhythmic pattern employed in the left hand of the piano accompaniment. While this pattern is fairly consistent, it is much less driving than that of the A section.

Example #5: “The Beginning”, mm. 30-32

With the action now occurring in the past tense, the character seems to recall a pleasant vision she once had. The focus of the singer is placed on smooth, legato lines which are slightly easier to achieve at this slower tempo. The sixteenth note turns are not

as aggressive and shocking. As well, the large leaps can be delivered much more smoothly and deliberately. The slower tempo also allows the time for experimentation with vocal colour, adding different dimensions to the notes on the page.

The climax of the song occurs in measure 36 on the high C#. While it is the highest note of the piece, it also occurs on the word “Christ”, the subject of the vision. This setting indicates that the presence of Christ is important in the character’s life, and gives an insight into her beliefs and values. As well, Christ is often seen as comforting and nurturing, which adds to the overall calm nature of this section. This is also the high point of the vision, a very important moment for the character.

The image displays a musical score for two systems, measures 33-38. The first system (measures 33-35) features a vocal line with lyrics: 'midst sun and wind and wave I saw'. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex bass line in the left hand. An 8va marking is present above the vocal line in measure 35. The second system (measures 36-38) features a vocal line with lyrics: Christ dan-cing on the wa-ter. The piano accompaniment continues with similar patterns, including a (loco) marking in the right hand in measure 37. The score is written in a key with four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#) and a common time signature.

Example #6: “The Beginning”, mm. 33-38

The A section returns in an altered form in measure 57. The driving bass line begins immediately, and the tempo is just slightly slower than originally presented. A slightly altered version of the sixteenth note fioratura previously found in measures 12 and 13 is stated in measures 65 and 66 on the words “clashing” and “flashing”. In this context, these words are aggressive and electric.

The image shows a musical score for measures 65 and 66. The top staff is the vocal line, starting at measure 65 with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The lyrics are "Clash- ing white, flash - ing clear, Christ on the wa -ter,". The word "ten." is circled above the final note of the phrase. The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment, starting at measure 65 with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piano part features a driving bass line with chords and a sixteenth-note flourish in the right hand. The piano part ends at measure 66 with a *sost. c.v.* (sostenuto, con voce) marking and a *pp molto delicato* dynamic.

Example #7: “The Beginning”, mm. 65-66

One would expect this sharp and frantic energy to continue to the end of the song.

However, memories of the B section appear in the final vocal phrase, measure 70 and 71.

The piano accompaniment returns to the calm and sustained bass line found in the B section. The final measure contains a bit of melody originally found in measure 58, which confirms that we are indeed still in the altered A section.

69 *pp* *estatico* Tempo II, ♩ = 52

dan-cing ——— for my spi-rit.

p

pp

p

73 *Lunga*

pp

ten.

Example #8: “The Beginning”, mm. 69-75

II. Naked in the City Streets

“Naked in the City Streets”, the second song of the cycle, continues many of the same themes and feelings as the previous song. Again, the character views their present circumstances with fear and trepidation, while the past is viewed with nostalgia. However, “Naked in the City Streets” takes this idea further into the negative sphere. An ABA form is once again employed. The A section represents the discomfort and unease associated with the present and the B section the nostalgia of the past.

The recitative opening of the A section has no clear tonal centre and is full of chromatic pitches which express a sense of confusion and lack of direction. These chromatic passages, which contain large leaps, frequent use of dissonance, and a jagged melodic contour, add to the discomfort created by the recitative setting as well as the fear expressed by the character.

Recitativo lento

mp dopo 3

How can a love be so time - less

poco agitato

p

c.u. sempre

con pedale

2

mf

and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take

tratt.

*

Example #9: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 1-3

The character seems to be in disbelief with what her life has become. This is reflected in the chaotic piano accompaniment found in measures 4-6.

The image displays a musical score for two systems. The first system (measures 2-3) features a vocal line with lyrics "and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a *tratt.* marking and a dynamic of *p*. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the vocal line with lyrics "wine with you eve-ry eve-ning and yet eve-ry mor-ning I wake a-lone?". The piano accompaniment in this system is more complex, featuring a *m.g. dolce* marking, a *pp* dynamic, and various rhythmic patterns including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. A *ten.* marking is present in both systems.

Example #10: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 2-6

The B section shows the character’s longing for her past, and her desire to go back and become the naïve person she once was. The character did not realize how difficult her life would become. While more positive than the A section, the B section is also quite negative and resentful. This song is the emotional low point for the character in the entire cycle.

	I ₀	I ₁₁	I ₆	I ₇	I ₈	I ₁	I ₄	I ₉	I ₂	I ₃	I ₁₀	I ₅	
P ₀	C	B	F#	G	G#	C#	E	A	D	D#	A#	F	R ₀
P ₁	C#	C	G	G#	A	D	F	A#	D#	E	B	F#	R ₁
P ₆	F#	F	C	C#	D	G	A#	D#	G#	A	E	B	R ₆
P ₅	F	E	B	C	C#	F#	A	D	G	G#	D#	A#	R ₅
P ₄	E	D#	A#	B	C	F	G#	C#	F#	G	D	A	R ₄
P ₁₁	B	A#	F	F#	G	C	D#	G#	C#	D	A	E	R ₁₁
P ₈	G#	G	D	D#	E	A	C	F	A#	B	F#	C#	R ₈
P ₃	D#	D	A	A#	B	E	G	C	F	F#	C#	G#	R ₃
P ₁₀	A#	A	E	F	F#	B	D	G	C	C#	G#	D#	R ₁₀
P ₉	A	G#	D#	E	F	A#	C#	F#	B	C	G	D	R ₉
P ₂	D	C#	G#	A	A#	D#	F#	B	E	F	C	G	R ₂
P ₇	G	F#	C#	D	D#	G#	B	E	A	A#	F	C	R ₇
	RI ₀	RI ₁₁	RI ₆	RI ₇	RI ₈	RI ₁	RI ₄	RI ₉	RI ₂	RI ₃	RI ₁₀	RI ₅	

Example #11: Tone Row Matrix for “Naked in the City Streets”

Greer has chosen to use the twelve tone technique to compose this song. The piano accompaniment enters with a retrograde form (R8), which is superimposed with the entrance of the vocal line with a prime form (P8). The first pitch of the vocal line is actually part of the piano’s tone row, excluding it from this newly introduced row. R8 and P8 are opposite forms, and Greer continues to use this dichotomy in the song.

Recitativo lento

mp dopo 3

How can a love be so time - less

poco agitato

p

c.u. sempre

con pedale

2

and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take

mf

tratt.

p

*

Example #12: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 1-2

The most easily grasped version of the tone row occurs in mm. 11-13, and is labelled P6.

It is heard in both the vocal line and doubled piano accompaniment.

11

P molto legato

I put a wall be - tween us and

pp

The image shows a musical score for the song "Naked in the City Streets". It consists of two systems of staves. The first system is for the voice, starting at measure 13. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes are: B-flat (quarter), A-flat (quarter), G (quarter), F (quarter), E (quarter), D (quarter), and C (half). The lyrics "mor-tared it with words," are written below the notes. The second system is for the piano accompaniment, also starting at measure 13. It features a treble clef and a bass clef. The right hand plays a sequence of chords: B-flat major (B-flat, D-flat, F), A-flat major (A-flat, C, E-flat), G major (G, B, D), and F major (F, A, C). The left hand plays a sequence of chords: B-flat major (B-flat, D-flat, F), A-flat major (A-flat, C, E-flat), G major (G, B, D), and F major (F, A, C). A line connects the G chord in the right hand to the G chord in the left hand, indicating a relationship between the two parts.

Example #13: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 11-13

Another example of opposite pairings occurs in mm. 3-6 between the voice and piano. A retrograde inversion (RI1) is found in the vocal line, while an inversion (I6) simultaneously occurs in the piano line.

2

mf

and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take

tratt.

p

*

Detailed description: This block shows the musical score for measures 2 and 3. The vocal line (top staff) begins with a treble clef and a 7/8 time signature. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note in the second measure. The lyrics are "and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take". The dynamic marking *mf* is placed above the second measure. The piano accompaniment (bottom staves) starts with a bass clef and a *p* dynamic marking. It includes a *tratt.* (tratto) marking and a fermata over a chord in the first measure. A small asterisk is placed below the piano part in the second measure.

4

wine with you eve-ry eve-ning and yet eve-ry mor-ning I wake a-lone?—

m.g.

dolce

pp

ten.

ten.

ten.

Detailed description: This block shows the musical score for measures 4, 5, and 6. The vocal line (top staff) continues with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note in the second measure. The lyrics are "wine with you eve-ry eve-ning and yet eve-ry mor-ning I wake a-lone?". The dynamic marking *mf* is placed above the second measure. The piano accompaniment (bottom staves) starts with a bass clef and a *p* dynamic marking. It includes a *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato) and *dolce* marking. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note in the second measure. The dynamic marking *pp* is placed below the piano part in the second measure. The piano part also includes a *ten.* (tension) marking and a fermata over a chord in the third measure.

Example #14: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 3-6.

Greer’s use of expression further strengthens the negativity of this song. For example, the text found in measure 19, “with people pointing” contains stress markings over the syllables of “pointing”. The sharp, pointed accents represent the physical action of pointing at someone and the negativity associated with this gesture.

18

mf

cresc.

and I was left na - ked in the ci - ty streets with peo - ple point - ing

mf

accel., ancora - - - -

3

Detailed description: This block shows the musical score for measures 18 and 19. The vocal line (top staff) begins with a treble clef and a 7/8 time signature. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note in the second measure. The lyrics are "and I was left na - ked in the ci - ty streets with peo - ple point - ing". The dynamic marking *mf* is placed above the first measure, and *cresc.* (crescendo) is placed above the second measure. The piano accompaniment (bottom staves) starts with a bass clef and a *mf* dynamic marking. It includes a *mf* dynamic marking and a *accel., ancora - - - -* marking. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note in the second measure. The piano part also includes a *3* marking below the piano part in the first measure.

20 *f* 3
and cry - ing out af - - ter me:
f 6 *ff* 6

Example #15: “Naked in the City Streets”, mm. 18-20

The climax of the song occurs in measures 18-20. The character states, “and I was left naked in the city streets with people pointing and crying out after me.” While this contains the most frantic and chaotic music of the song, this statement demonstrates the vulnerability the character feels.

The A section returns in measure 26 with more recitative. The frank and exposed delivery of the text, along with the words, “and my shape depends upon the charity of others,” suggest the character no longer feels she has any control over her life.

28 *mp* *dim.....* *rall.....*
and myshape de-pends- u- pon the char - i - ty of oth - ers.
rall. 9 *

Example #16: “Naked in the City Streets”, m. 28

III. My Mother's Hands

The third song, “My Mother’s Hands”, is a dramatic turning point in the cycle. Greer has chosen to keep the ABA form intact once again; however, the character now views her present circumstances with positivity and joy, while her past is viewed negatively and with resentment. The A section conveys the present, while the B section conveys the negative past. The character seems to be moving in a more positive direction, and no longer fears living in the moment.

Written as a lullaby, the A section is calm and peaceful. The tuneful melodies found in both the piano accompaniment and vocal line create a smooth contour that reflects the positivity now associated with the present. The stepwise motion and use of smaller leaps again creates a sense of comfort. The most tonal song of the entire cycle, Greer elaborates B-flat major through the majority of the piece. As well, he adds a dominant pedal in measures 1-12 that confirms the key. In this case, tonality is used to suggest familiarity.

The image displays a musical score for the song "My Mother's Hands". It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the piano accompaniment in B-flat major, 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of "Tempo di ninnananna tranquillo, ♩=40". The piano part features a dominant pedal point in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp*, *dolcissimo*, and *pochis.*. The second system shows the vocal line starting at measure 5 with the lyrics "Will you re-mem-ber, lit-tle- child, the". The vocal line is marked *p espress.* and the piano accompaniment is marked *(s)* and *(senza agitazione)*. The score is written in B-flat major and 3/4 time.

Example #17: “My Mother’s Hands”, mm. 1-8

Greer openly quotes Ravel in measures 22 and 23 of the vocal line. This excerpt, from the opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, is sung by the mother as she scolds her child for throwing and destroying his toys. Greer’s use of this melody seems to suggest a more playful reprimanding of a child.

Musical score for measures 21-22. The score is in 9/8 time and G minor. Measure 21 features a vocal line with the lyrics "fal- ling" and a piano accompaniment with a *cresc.* marking. Measure 22 features a vocal line with the lyrics "and your toy from be - ing" and a piano accompaniment with a *sub. p* marking. The piano part in measure 22 includes two groups of four sixteenth notes.

Musical score for measure 23. The score is in 9/8 time and G minor. The vocal line has the lyrics "tossed?". The piano accompaniment features a duplet on the second major beat of the bar.

Example #18: “My Mother’s Hands”, mm. 21-23

While the majority of the A section is peaceful, this begins to change in measure 23. The duplet used on the second major beat of the bar brings an end to the rocking motion of the previous quarter-eighth rhythm. A new melodic figure then enters the right hand accompaniment, and seems to emphasize G minor. Dramatically speaking, this

signals the dawn of realization upon the character. She is beginning to see that she has forgotten many memories from her childhood, and what her mother was like in her youth.

23
tossed?
mf

27
Pochiss. meno mosso, con rubato
tratt - - -
Pochiss. meno mosso, con rubato
sim. sim.
3

Example #19: “My Mother’s Hands”, mm. 23-29

The B section begins in measure 28. The melody from the transition appears again, but is more fully elaborated through the dense left hand accompaniment. Upon the entry of the vocal line, the character begins to chastise her lack of mindfulness as a child. The *poco agitato* marking and the use of different rhythmic figures highlight her negative feelings toward her past self.

30 *mf poco agitato*

Be - cause I did not pay close e-nough at ten-tion to de - tail,

mp legato

Example #20: “My Mother’s Hands”, mm. 30-31

An important realization occurs in measures 39-41. The accompaniment becomes quite sparse and eventually silent, allowing for clear declamation of the character’s thoughts. She is beginning to truly appreciate the effort and love her mother has put into raising her.

38 *a piacere mp*

skin. My mo-ther has the

41 *molto rit. Tempo I*

hands that ne-ver rest.

p *f* *sim.* *8va*

Example #21: “My Mother’s Hands”, mm. 38-44

The original melody from the beginning of the song returns in measure 42. This signals a return to the positive and lovely emotions associated with the A section. However, the next entry of the vocal line continues to show the character's disappointment with herself and her sadness at forgetting. This brings the music to the climax point in measure 52. She has now realized that things do change, and will always continue to change.

45 Pochiss. meno mosso

p Why was I so sure? so un-

(8) *dim. sempre* *p cantabile*

Detailed description: This musical system covers measures 45 to 48. The vocal line begins in measure 45 with the lyrics "Why was I so sure? so un-". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Performance markings include "Pochiss. meno mosso" at the top, a dynamic marking of *p* for the vocal line, and *dim. sempre* and *p cantabile* for the piano accompaniment. A first ending bracket labeled (8) spans measures 46 and 47.

49

vi- gi-lant? na- ive e-nough- to be- lieve that things ne- ver change

Detailed description: This musical system covers measures 49 to 52. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "vi- gi-lant? na- ive e-nough- to be- lieve that things ne- ver change". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar melodic and harmonic structure. The key signature remains B-flat major.

53

that mo-thers do not grow old?

dolce *sim.*

Detailed description: This musical system covers measures 53 to 56. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics "that mo-thers do not grow old?". The piano accompaniment features a more active melodic line in the right hand. Performance markings include *dolce* and *sim.* (sforzando) for the piano accompaniment.

Example #22: "My Mother's Hands", mm. 45-56

While the character of the previous two songs would follow this major realization into a negative sphere, she has grown enough to see the positive side of this idea. The realization that things will always change gives the character the opportunity to start consciously remembering her mother from this point further. This positivity is further echoed in the return of the original piano melody in augmented form in measure 56, signalling the return of the A section. The character returns to her original thought of hope that the young baby she sees has the opportunity to remember and cherish her mother from the very beginning.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece "My Mother's Hands". The first system, starting at measure 53, features a vocal line with the lyrics "that mo-thers do not grow old?" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes markings for *dolce* and *sim.*. The second system, starting at measure 57, features a vocal line with the lyrics "Will you re- men-ber lit-tle child," and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes markings for *pp sognando* and *sempre delicato*. The score is written in a key with two flats and a common time signature.

Example #23: "My Mother's Hands", mm. 56-60

IV. Laughter

“Laughter”, the fourth song in the cycle, is full of excitement and joy. It is written almost as a continuation of “My Mother’s Hands” as there is no clear resolution between the songs. This signals another change in the character’s feelings and emotions about her life. An outright expression of pure joy and amazement, this song is written solely in the present tense. The character is now living in the moment, unconcerned with the emotions brought about by her past.

Greer slightly alters the ABA form by beginning with a coloratura introduction. These somewhat scalar passages show the character’s ecstatic view of her life. While this is an excellent tool to showcase the virtuosity of the singer, these difficult patterns also represent the sound of joyous laughter.

Vivace assai ♩. = 144

p quasi risa

Ah Ah

Vivace assai ♩. = 144

p

Example #24: “Laughter”, mm. 1-4

The trill on the high A-sharp which progresses up to the B seems to be the height of excitement and happiness, and signals the beginning of the A section in measure 16.

Musical score for Example #25, measures 13-15. The score is in 3/8 time and consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting at measure 13 with a trill. The middle staff is the right hand of the piano, featuring arpeggiated figures and fingerings (4, 5). The bottom staff is the left hand of the piano, also featuring arpeggiated figures and fingerings (4, 5). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Example #25: “Laughter”, mm. 13-15

The A section marks the first entrance of actual sung text. However, Greer continues to write in the coloratura style, with large leaps and sections of fioratura present throughout. The strong use of metaphor and imagery allows the listener a glimpse of the joyful and jubilant emotions the character feels at this moment.

Musical score for Example #26, measures 16-21. The score is in 3/8 time and consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting at measure 16 with the lyrics "Laugh - ter brings wine red as blood". The middle staff is the right hand of the piano, featuring arpeggiated figures and dynamics (sf, p legg). The bottom staff is the left hand of the piano, also featuring arpeggiated figures. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked "Tempo II, quarter note = 112". The lyrics continue in measure 19: "flow - ing from me like the foun - tain at".

Example #26: “Laughter”, mm. 16-21

This short A section ends with the emergence of the B section in measure 24. Based upon the coloratura introduction, the B section uses similar scalar patterns. These effervescent runs seem to bubble up from within the character and burst forth when words are unable to describe how she feels.

Example #27: “Laughter”, mm. 23-28

This is particularly evident in measure 31 with the short run up to high C.

29

[Tacet
ad lib.]

Te

tr

tr

8va

tr

Te

sfz

Example #28: “Laughter”, mm. 29-31

Although the A section returns in measure 32 with the use of more text, the musical material is highly augmented. The only ounce of familiarity left is the text which again contains highly expressive words that describe fanciful imagery. The coloratura style of writing is employed once again. These joyous expressions continue for approximately ten more measures.

33 *cresco poco a poco*
 O - pen hands I re lease my soul and pea-cocks

37 *f*
 spread them-selves a-bout the room.

pochis. allarg.
f appassionato

Example #29: “Laughter”, mm. 33-38

Then, in measure 49, the character seems to relax into happiness. The longer note values add more calm to the overall mood, yet still recall the ecstatic joy that appeared in the previous measures. Once again, this shows the growth and maturity of the character.

47 *meno mosso, con larghezza*
sub p
 sel-tle- on a heart, a heart now south - ern with

(8)

(8)

sub pp e chiaro

50
 co - lour.

Example #30: “Laughter”, mm. 47-51

V. A Red Red Heart

“A Red Red Heart” brings the story to a close. This song shows the culmination of change and growth that has occurred within the character throughout the previous four songs. Respecting the structure of Bindig’s poem, Greer has chosen to break with the ABA form he has consistently relied on, and adopt a through-composed form because the text is one long sentence, representing an unending train of thought. The final difference from the rest of the cycle occurs with verb tense. This time, the character is looking to the future, the first time she has done so.

The accompaniment is fairly simple as steady half-note chords are broken up with flourishes of embellishment. Greer always returns to the chordal setting, further grounding the character in hope and positivity for her future.

The image displays a musical score for the song "A Red Red Heart". It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a tempo marking of "Andante" (♩ = 52-56) and a dynamic of "mp" with the instruction "con poco rubato estatico". The tempo then changes to "A tempo". The lyrics for the first system are: "When fi-nally I see you, my dear and an-cient friend, I shall cast off the". The second system begins with a measure number of 5. The tempo markings "rubato come sopra" and "(a tempo)" are used. The lyrics for the second system are: "man-tle of my Ca-tho-li-ci-sm and em-brace you with an o-pen". The piano accompaniment features steady half-note chords with occasional embellishments. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord.

Example #31: “A Red Red Heart”, mm. 1-7

The vocal line is quite melodic and settled. The comfort and ease the character feels is very evident, and though her excitement is reserved, it remains quite evident. For example, measures 14-15 show a glimpse at the overwhelming love she feels for this person, and the unapologetic nature of her emotional expression.

Musical score for measures 14-15. The vocal line (treble clef) features a melodic phrase starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are "an un - a-bashed and un - re - len - ting heart." The piano accompaniment (grand staff) provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Example #32: “A Red Red Heart”, mm. 14-15

The final vocal phrase shows the stability and confidence the character feels. This statement, set simply with long note values, encapsulates the growth she has experienced. Simply put, “A Red Red Heart” gathers the entire cycle together in just a few measures.

Musical score for measures 21-27. The vocal line (treble clef) features a long, sustained note for the word "heart" in measure 21, followed by "a red red heart." The piano accompaniment (grand staff) includes markings such as "poco rall." and "(a tempo)". The score concludes with dynamic markings "quasi rall." and "ppp penderosi" in measure 27.

Example #33: “A Red Red Heart”, mm. 21-27

Conclusion

Through an analysis of these five songs, one can arrive at conclusions about the major stylistic aspects used in “The Beginning” and “Naked in the City Streets”. Several musical features are set in opposition to one another across the entire cycle. Areas rooted in traditional tonality indicate ease and comfort, while areas that are more atonal reflect negative emotions and discomfort. A more extended formal structure is employed in all but the final song, whose brevity captures the character’s new-found longing for the future. Sections with a more readily-grasped melody generally reflect familiarity, while more disjunct and altered chromatic passages suggest fear. Greer favours a widely divergent range of dynamics throughout the cycle, as well as frequent instances of text painting. Louder dynamics indicate discomfort and chaos, while softer dynamics indicate peace and comfort. Regular rhythms depict positivity and ease, while irregular uses, such as triplets and syncopation, depict unease and negativity. Greer delineates contrasting moods through the piano’s accompaniment patterns and figures which tend to echo or anticipate and hence also reflect the character’s growth.

To summarize, *The Red Red Heart* is designed as a narrative told through the character’s changing ideas and feelings towards her past, present, and future circumstances. While the present is viewed with fear in the beginning of the cycle, it is viewed with optimism in the second half of the cycle. Similarly, the past is viewed with longing and nostalgia in the beginning, and with distrust in the second half. The final song looks towards the future with hope and positivity, reflecting the character’s overall personal growth. Thus, from the five poems he has selected from Bindig’s collection,

Greer creates an intense and captivating psychological narrative to which new performers may add their own layer of emotional, dramatic, and musical intent.

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I. THE BEGINNING

MARIANNE BINDIG
[FOR LEN...]

JOHN GREER

Largo *pp* [tempo nuovo]

The first breath—

come un sospir

pp *p* *sfz*

6 Presto agitato $\text{♩} = 92$ *mf* *sf*

The first breath is slapped in-to my bo- dy.

mp

sempre staccato

10

I gasp light - - ning

mf *echo* *mf* *mp*

13

storms fren - - zy, at the high - est fre-quen-cy-

[mp]

16

f marcato brillante

dia - mond shoes

f

sub. mf

19

cut-ting in-to ice and sparks like white fire,

(s)

[mp]

mf

22

fire of full moons

8va

26

moons of

rall. al.....

mf dim. sempre (ma senza rall.) c.v.

30

subdivide

Andante grazioso, ♩ = 52

mp legato, cantabile e estatico

mar- ble. And there, on the far- ther shore,

pp* p chiaro e sonore p m.d sopra (sim.)

* - ostinato sempre sotto e pp come marmarando

33

'midst sun and wind and wave I saw

8^{mo}

36

Christ dan-cing on the wa-ter.

(9)

(loco)

39

He was bright, sharp, stab-bing pains pains of

42

death, pains of birth, their move - ments a

dolcissimo

45

cross the wa - ter, a cross my bo - dy still as stone, ec - stat - ic

loco

49

Christ like fire _____ Christ like ice,

c. v.

53

e - le - ments cap - ri - cious their wil - der - ness com - plete.

PPP *ten.*

Tempo I, ma poco meno mosso, ♩ = 88

57

Vo - cabu - lar - ies change, e - volve, are ren - dered ob - so -

Tempo I, ma poco meno mosso

pp sempre
meno agitato (senza cresc sempre)

61

lete. Mar - ble, dia - monds, ice and moon

più, f

65 *mp* *ten.*
Clash - ing white, flash - ing clear, Christ on the wa - ter,
p *sost. c.v.* *pp molto delicato*

69 *pp* *estatico* *subdivide* *Tempo II, ♩ = 52*
dan - cing — for my spi - rit.
p *pp* *p*

73 *Lunga*
pp *ten.*

II. NAKED IN THE CITY STREETS

MARIANNE BINDIG

JOHN GREER

Recitativo lento

mp dopo 3

How can a love be so time - less

poco agitato

p

c.u. sempre

con pedale

2

mf

and a heart be so full of fear? How is it that I take

tratt.

p

*

4

wine with you eve-ry eve-ning and yet eve - ry mor - ning I wake a - lone? —

m.g. dolce

pp

ten.

ten.

7 **Andante sostenuto** ♩ = 58 *mp* *ten.*

I no long-er know the state of my - self;

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 58 *p*

9

ev -ery-thing with-in me, e - ven the best parts, has be - come an ab - strac - tion.

11 *P molto legato*

I put a wall be - tween us and

13 *[Poco piu mosso]* *accel. poco a poco*

mor-tared it with words, but the o - cean and my

cresc. e accel. poco a poco

legato ma agitato

16

mem - o - ry con - spired a - gainst me

agitato

18 *mf* *cresc.*

and was left na - ked in the ci - ty streets with peo - ple point - ing

mf accel., ancora - - - - -

20 *f*

and cry - ing out af - - ter me:

Subito meno mosso, ♩ = 52 - 54
con compassione

21 *mp*

"there goes the girl with an un - dy - ing love!

23

we know her by ^{the} her shape, by ^{the} her red red heart

24 *p* (•) 3 [Recitativo come sopra] *mp*

she car - ries in a cloth slung round her neck. I am de-fined by strang-ers,

calando [Recitativo come sopra] *p* (c.v.)

dim. sempre

27 *mf* *dopo* 3 *ten.* 3

What I most crave I most fear,

piu agitato e f *ten. accel* 15^{ma}

28 *mp* *dim.....* *rall.*

and myshape de-pends- u-pon the char-i-ty of oth-ers.

rall. 9 *

III. MY MOTHER'S HANDS

Tempo di ninnananna tranquillo, ♩=40

pp *dolcissimo* *sim.* *pochis.*

8va

This system contains the first three measures of the piece. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di ninnananna tranquillo' with a quarter note equal to 40 beats per minute. The piano part begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and includes markings for *dolcissimo* and *sim.* (sostenuto). The vocal line starts with a rest and then enters in the second measure. An *8va* marking is present above the piano part.

5 *p espress.*

Will you re- mem- ber, lit- tle- child, the

8va *(senza agitazione)*

This system covers measures 4 through 8. The vocal line begins with measure 5, marked with a measure rest and the dynamic *p espress.* The lyrics are 'Will you re- mem- ber, lit- tle- child, the'. The piano accompaniment continues with a *8va* marking and the instruction *(senza agitazione)*. The vocal line has a slur over measures 5-8.

9

young hands of your mo- ther?

8va

This system covers measures 9 through 12. The vocal line begins with measure 9, with the lyrics 'young hands of your mo- ther?'. The piano accompaniment continues with a *8va* marking. The vocal line has a slur over measures 9-12.

13 *p* *ten.* *p*

When a-lone-some mid-life night, will you re-call their smooth and

sim.

sim.

17

de-li-cate beau-ty, their strength and com-pet-ence as they guard-ed you from

21 *sub. p*

fal-ling and your toy from be-ing

cresc. *sub.* *p*

23

tossed?

mf

27

Pochiss. meno mosso, con rubato

tratt *Pochiss. meno mosso, con rubato*
sim. sim. sim.

mf

30

mf poco agitato

Be - cause I did not pay close e-nough at ten-tion to de - tail,

mp legato

5 7

32 *f*

I have for - got - ten my mo - ther's young hands

34 *f*

I re - mem - ber on - ly the wear, the

36

lines, the clar - i - ty - of - the

38 *freely*
a piacere mp 4
skin. My mo-ther has the

41 *molto rit.* **Tempo I**
hands that ne-ver rest.

p *f* 8^{va} 4 *sim.*

45 **Pochiss. meno mosso**
p
Why was I so sure? so un-

(8) *dim. sempre* 2 *p cantabile*

49

vi-gi-lant? na-ive e-nough to be-lieve that things ne-ver change

53

that mo-thers do not grow old?

dolce

sim.

57

pp sognando

Will you re-men-ber lit-tle child,

sempre delicato

61

the young hands of your

64

mo-ther?

pp

calando

67

Play only if No. III is excerpted

rall.

ppp

Attacca No. IV

IV. LAUGHTER

♩ = 1 beat

MARIANNE BINDIG

JOHN GREER

Vivace assai $\text{♩} = 144$ *p quasi risa*

Ah Ah

Vivace assai $\text{♩} = 144$

p

5

Ah

(tr)

p sim.

9

poco più f

ten.

cresc.

(tr)

13

(tr) [Musical notation]

16 **Tempo II**, $\text{♩} = 112$
mf

Laugh - ter brings wine red as blood

Tempo II, $\text{♩} = 112$

sf *p* *legg.*

19

flow - ing from me like the foun - tain at

22

Ca - - - - - na.

mf *m.g.*

Measures 22-23: Vocal line with lyrics "Ca - - - - - na." and piano accompaniment. The piano part features triplets and dynamic markings *mf* and *m.g.*

23

Tempo I (♩ - 144)

mp

Ah - - - - -

f *m.g.* *mp*

Measures 23-24: Vocal line with lyrics "Ah - - - - -" and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamic markings *f*, *m.g.*, and *mp*. A tempo change to *Tempo I* (♩ - 144) is indicated. The piano part ends with a trill and a fermata.

25

cresc.

Measures 25-26: Vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a *cresc.* marking and a trill with a fermata.

29 *[Tacet ad lib.]* **Tempo II** *mp* *3*
With _____

tr *tr* *tr* *tr* *8va* *tr* **Tempo II**
sfz *p leggiero*

33 *cresco poco a poco* *3* *3*
O - pen hands I re lease my soul and pea-cocks

cresc. poco a poco

37 *f*
spread them-selves a-bout the room.

pochis. allarg. *f appassionato*

39 *mf* They_ whirl- pool up, fans of dazz- ling *molto cresc.*

41 green and blue. *mf* *molto*

43 fan-tas-tic-birds, ti -ny and thou- - sands *p*

47

meno mosso, con larghezza
sub p

sel-~~le~~ on a heart, a heart now south - ern with

(8)

sub pp e chiaro

50

co - lour.

52

rall. al fine.
dimp.
pp

Winnipeg,
January 1, 1995

V. A RED RED HEART

MARIANNE BINDIG

JOHN GREER

Andante $\text{♩} = 52-56$ *mp* *con poco rubato estatico* *A tempo*

When fi-nal-ly I see you, my dear and an-cient friend, I shall cast off the

Andante $\text{♩} = 52-56$ *A tempo* *sim.*

mp

5 *rubato come sopra* *(a tempo)*

man-tle of my Ca-tho-li-ci-sm and em-brace you with an o-pen

rubato come sopra *(a tempo)*

colla voce

8 *a tempo*

heart, a heart full of love and me-mo-ries as tall as our

ten.

c.v.

12

sha- dows_ af- ter din- ner, a na- ked heart,

p

14

an un- a-bashed and un- re - len - ting heart,

p

16

quasi f

a red, red heart, a light by the al- tar that

ten. p (a tempo)

poco tratt.

ten.

p

m.d. ad lib.

19 *rubato ancora* *a tempo*
pp estatico

ne-ver goes out Your Christ ly

c.u.

3

21

heart a red red heart.

poco rall. *(a tempo)*

24

quasi rall. *ppp penderosi*



Wittig, Megan <megan.wittig@uleth.ca>

The Red Red Heart

2 messages

Wittig, Megan <megan.wittig@uleth.ca>
To: info@plangere.com

Sun, May 3, 2015 at 10:00 PM

Hello,

I am completing my master's thesis on John Greer's The Red Red Heart, and was wondering if I could be granted permission to include the full musical score in my document.

Thank you!

- Megan Wittig

Brian McDonagh <info@plangere.com>
To: "Wittig, Megan" <megan.wittig@uleth.ca>

Mon, May 4, 2015 at 12:29 AM

Hello Megan,
I have no objection to your reproducing any or all of this score for this purpose.

If you are pleased with the result perhaps you would let me read the final product. I am planning to include relevant academic writing both on the website and within the physical publications. Anyone who buys this kind of music is interested in knowing more. Modern Canadian repertoire does not tend to attract the casual browser:-). Having your work published in this way is very important if you see university teaching as part of your career plan.

Good luck!
Brian

[Quoted text hidden]

(Original for *The Beginning*; this poem had two parts and no title.)

I.

And there, on the farther shore,
'midst sun and wind and wave,
I saw Christ dancing on the water.
He was bright, sharp, stabbing pains,
pains of death, pains of birth,
their movement across the water,
across my body-still-as-stone, ecstatic.

The first breath is slapped into my body.
I gasp lightning storms, frenzy at the highest frequency,
diamond shoes cutting into ice
and sparks like white fire, fire of full moons,
moons of marble,
Christ like fire, Christ like ice,
elements capricious, their wilderness complete.

It is the beginning of some strange end:
the dance without design,
the fire without formula,
communication without sound,
the interaction of light, the science of the spirit.

Vocabularies change, evolve, are rendered obsolete.
Marble, diamonds, ice and moon
clashing white, flashing clear –
Christ on the water, dancing for my spirit.

II.

Now we are out where it shines.
Your oars spawn fish,
fish like arrows,
arrows that grow out across the water,
guide you to where-you've-been,
swell and burst, and bursting, die.

Christ on point, on every sun-soaked crest
and you and I
solidified by light –
cast forever like stars into this watery heaven.

Morning glories in midday skies,
you and I
and christ-on-the-water
dancing for our spirits.

(Original for *Naked in the City Streets*; this poem also has two parts and no title.)

1.

How can a love be so timeless
and a heart so full of fear?
How is it that I take wine with you every evening
and yet every morning I wake alone?
I no longer know the shape of myself.
Everything within me, even my best parts,
has become an abstraction.
I put a wall between us
and mortared it with words,
but the ocean and my memory
conspired against me
and I was left naked in the city streets
with people pointing and crying out after me:
"There goes the girl with an undying love!
We know her by her shape, by the red, red heart
she carries in a cloth slung 'round her neck."
I am defined by strangers.
What I most crave I most fear
and my shape depends upon
the charity of others.

2.

It is bigger than this, she said.
It passes the understanding of mind and body.
It is not of this time, this place;
It lives in the realm of the spirit
where all things move like whispers
and shadows follow after,
telling us our own truths as though it were never too
late.
It is past the cliché of pain or pleasure.
It moves without definition,
a Being that hovers over us,
blessing us.
I could not stop thinking, she said.
When I stopped trying to stop,
I found the empty places
where a fresh wind still blows,
and for seconds strung together like perfectly formed
Biwas,
I felt freedom
and held peace in the cup of my tongue.
Some days I could get past concepts,
and it was then that I felt myself released into a vast
balance,
a ubiquitous white.
Sometimes, she said, it is suprasuperlative –
I cannot distinguish between the ocean
and myself.

Working Women – My Mother’s Hands

(This is Bindig’s original title)

Will you remember,
little child,
the young hands of your mother?
When alone some mid-life night,
will you recall
their smooth and delicate beauty,
their strength and competence
as they guarded you from falling
and your toys from being tossed?

Because I did not pay close enough attention to
Detail,
I have forgotten my mother’s young hands.
I remember only the wear,
the lines,
the clarity of their skin.

My mother has the hands that never rest.

Why was I so sure?
so unvigilant?
naïve enough to believe that things never change,
that mothers
do not grow old?

(Original poem from which *Laughter* was extracted; there are 5 stanzas.)

Margarita

I.

Into the world, out of the world.
So on she reads her book.
Distract pauses in the telling.
Forgetting hunger
she quenches her thirst with epilogue and notes on.
Excursions through humidity
not part of her psychology
She drifts on a raincloud
Into the world and out.

II.

Ugly shoes coloured kitchen cupboard green
Curtain glows white at three a.m.
Light refusing to be dimmed
Pillow rejecting over tired head
Latent fireworks she is afraid to question
Dreams interrogate
Dawn threatens suspended
Door beckons
The whole world laughs to see a woman sideways.

III.

Waking wants no company
Yet all through the bedclothes
lingers the smell of man.
[Dreams without good, only opposing forces of evil,
leave a heroine without definition.]
She wanders through days
unpurposeful except to find a purpose
Of no consequence her ardent effort; it is slipping.
She takes her kettle, she makes some tea.

IV.

Laughter brings wine red as blood
flowing from her like the fountain at Cana.
With open hands she releases her soul and
peacocks spread themselves about The Room.
They whirlpool up, fans of dazzling green and blue.
[Her head sprouts daisies
where she thought you'd give her roses.]
Fantastic birds, tiny and thousands,
settle on a heart now southern with colour.

V.

She talked often of her canvas.
The last time I saw her she said,
"My canvas is beneath me; I am walking on it.
There is yellow paint on the sole of my right shoe
And red paint on the sole of my left,
and the threat of mud is everywhere.
She was egg shell white -
the stain of red wine framing neglected lips -
her skirts of purple, of gypsy's cotton in the wind.

When finally I see you
my dear and ancient friend,
I shall cast off the mantle of my Catholicism
and embrace you with an open heart
a heart full of love
and memories as tall as our shadows after dinner
a naked heart
an unabashed and unrelenting heart
a red red heart
a light by the altar that never goes out
your Christly heart
a red red heart

All poems in the manuscript by Marianne Bindig.



Wittig, Megan <megan.wittig@uleth.ca>

The Red Red Heart

Ms gertrude macgregor <reinedestartes@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: Ms gertrude macgregor <reinedestartes@yahoo.com>
To: "Wittig, Megan" <megan.wittig@uleth.ca>

Tue, Apr 28, 2015 at 5:44 PM

Great. Here you go:

April 28, 2015
To Whom It May Concern;

Megan Wittig has my permission to include the original versions of my poems, written for the song cycle The Red Red Heart (composer John Greer), in the paper for her Masters Degree.

Thank you,
Marianne Bindig.

On Tuesday, April 28, 2015 4:59 PM, "Wittig, Megan" <megan.wittig@uleth.ca> wrote:

Oh wonderful! Email is just fine :) Thank you so much!

On Tue, Apr 28, 2015 at 2:44 PM, Ms gertrude macgregor <reinedestartes@yahoo.com> wrote:

Of course I do remember you! We Skyped so I even remember your lovely face. Sure you can use the poetry Megan. Can the letter be sent via email or do you need it via snail mail?

On Tuesday, April 28, 2015 3:37 PM, "Wittig, Megan" <megan.wittig@uleth.ca> wrote:

Hi Marianne,

I'm not sure if you remember me, but I am writing my masters thesis on The Red Red Heart. I am in the final stages before submission for defense, and was wondering if it

Interview with John Greer, composer
June 26, 2014

Megan Wittig: Why did you choose to set these particular poems?

John Greer: I was searching for texts for a song cycle from Tracy Dahl, and she expressed interest in words with some sort of "spiritual" message, or at least a spiritual slant. That summer I was working on *The Rake's Progress* in Banff as chorus master and Marianne Bindig was there singing Baba. She gave me her first sheath of poems to read, then not separated into separate folios, just loose! A few of the poems moved me to tears immediately and I knew that here were ideal texts for Tracy's cycle. Some, like 1, 3 and 5 were obvious choices from my first reading. I chose two additional poems to provide variety and continuity in the cycle.

Wittig: How did Bindig's words inspire you? Did you make musical choices based on her text?

Greer: All my composition is text-driven. Without words, only the most banal and unspecific musical ideas come. I guess that's why I'm a song composer! The poems, as with all of Marianne's work, were written to be recited, so I had that working for me from the start as well. (Some poems depend a great deal on their visual layout and the power of thoughtful pondering, but Marianne's are designed to make as much an impression when heard as when read. ALL decisions I make are based on the text and the natural prosody of the words: rhythms, range, direction of pitch, harmonic underpinning, etc.

Wittig: Where do you get your inspiration from?

Greer: Impossible to say, really. Sometimes, after I've read a poem over and assimilated it enough, a song can appear ready-made in my mind, so that I can barely write fast enough to get the ideas down on paper. (Rare!) More often, I work things out carefully from bar to bar. For a cycle I always start with an overall scheme of keys, tempi, time signatures, etc., eager as Francis Poulenc is, to make sure there is as much contrast as possible between individual songs. I often know first what I want to do at key points in songs, then work to and away from those points as I go. I used musical materials as conscientiously as possible to compliment and highlight the chosen text. I can't even begin to write a song unless I have thoroughly read and reread and assimilated any given text.

**Interview with Marianne Bindig, mezzo-soprano and poet
July 7, 2014**

Megan Wittig: How involved were you in the selection of poems and compositional process?

Marianne Bindig: I was not at all in on the selection process. I was so thrilled that John liked any of my poems... we can discuss how that came about on Skype.... he basically chose what he thought would suit Tracy - he said that as soon as he read some of them, he started hearing music for her voice in his head - he might have said that particularly the stanza from "Margarita" lent itself to wild flights of coloratura. He sent things he liked on to Tracy for approval and she liked them - I was just so pleased. It was quite a way to start out being set in my books! I was, I think, 30 yrs. old at the time.

Wittig: Where did your inspiration for these particular five poems come from?

Bindig: Inspiration for the poems are dealt with a little bit at the beginning of PLANGERE's edition of the songs I think. We can discuss more if you like when we chat. They are drawn from various sources and of course not related.

Wittig: How did you feel about Greer using poems from different bodies of work and splicing up "Margarita"?

Bindig: As far as John using things from various sources, it did not matter one bit to me. I consider that when I hand things over to a composer of his ability and a person of his sensibility that they are in very safe hands and I trusted him completely. I was excited to see what he would do with my words. It was thrilling to know that he found them inspirational - that was a dream come true really. He left out a little bit of the "Margarita" stanza he used and I thought that was really right for the song. He always asked permission for changes and I always allowed them because he was always right. I did not feel that way necessarily with others. I always see eye to eye with John and his choices are organic in my opinion. He loves singers and words and it shows at every turn.

Wittig: *Love Poems* was published in 2001. How did Greer have access to this poem?

Bindig: I must correct you on one fact. I never have had "Love Poems" published. They are copyrighted. I have longed to do a self published version with art by some of my favourite artist friends but have yet to gather the resources for such a venture. I have not given up hope! ha ha... but desire wanes.... Before this book existed there were a handful of poems in a journal I kept and when I handed John "Working Women", I also handed him that little journal. What became "Naked in the City Streets" (part of a longer 2 part poem) was in that journal.

Wittig: How did you work together to give the poems names?

Bindig: Names for poems.... Hmmmmm.... tough to really remember... I was living at The Heartbreak Hotel at the time....ha ha ha....and John was in the States teaching....we spoke on the phone off and on.... I remember that he named them and I okayed it.... but that could be a false memory... I'll email him now....

**Interview with Tracy Dahl, soprano
October 15, 2014**

Megan Wittig: Why did you choose to collaborate with John on the creation of this cycle?

Tracy Dahl: The collaboration was one borne of a recital here in Winnipeg. I wanted to do a new cycle and have one that was written for my voice. The recital was in Winnipeg and as John is a Winnipegger that made the most sense. Also I knew his work and thought he would write well for my voice. He had been my coach in TO so he was familiar with my voice and what I could do.

Wittig: Did you have any input in the poetry ultimately chosen as the text?

Dahl: John sent me many poems by Marianne Bindig. I still have them. Many of them were photocopies of handwritten poems. I did not in the end have any say in the decision about which ones he would set.

Wittig: How do you relate to the text as a performer? Has your approach changed over time?

Dahl: Yes I have definitely changed in my interpretation of the poems from the first time I sang them. It has been very interesting to see how the audience perceived them as well. I had one lady who felt they were all about a nun! Life has a way of altering how you wear poetry. I think I was very young when they were premiered to understand Naked in the City streets or even the title song of the cycle, Red Red Heart. I may have had more experiences of death or vulnerability that gave me a different perspective on those songs. Definitely My Mothers Hands has changed as now my mother has Dementia and I know she doesn't remember anything. I have come to the understanding that the singer in that song is not the mother but an Aunt or a friend but one that has a deeper understanding, the kind that usually comes from loss, of what needs to be cherished and remembered.

Wittig: How has the singing of the cycle (from a technical standpoint) changed from the premiere to now?

Dahl: I think that technically the first piece now needs my brain! Not to count but to sustain some of those long lines that were easy as a young singer. I am better able to live in Laughter as I have sung more difficult music. At the time that may have been the most difficult song I had learned. I have more tools to help me analyze and really learn a piece. The lower notes now are much easier to access in Red Red Heart. I have more colours that I can access now that I have sung Gilda, Lucia. These are roles that added lower colours to my voice and helped take this to a new level or a different level.

One of the things that is the SAME is that I need to slow down and re-learn passages of it. It is not an easy sing. There are difficult intervals and rhythms. I go right back to square one with certain sections and never take for granted that they are correct.